

KASHMIR

The Untold Story of Men and Matters

B.L. KAK



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*To my Tormentor
who, like the afflicted Saturn,
brought trouble and made my heart sick.*

INTRODUCTION

A book may be defined as a written, or printed, message of considerable length, meant for public circulation and recorded on materials that are light yet durable enough to afford comparatively easy portability. I know more perhaps has been written and much more has been said about Kashmir than any other State in India. And yet the sensitive region, Kashmir, offers a lot for writers, historians and political scientists.

How Kashmir came to be regarded important, politically and strategically, after the partition of India in 1947 has, undoubtedly, been touched upon by some writers in the past. But some important social, political and administrative matters of the region after the war between India and Pakistan in 1971 deserved to be made the subject of a comprehensive study.

And when I make reference to these matters, I have in view many a change having taken place in the behaviour of the Kashmiris, in political and economic spheres, and in the attitudes of China and Pakistan across the borders of Kashmir. I have described some interesting happenings in Kashmir to show how they influenced certain trends in the State and behaviour of the Kashmiri leaders and political groups.

Attention in the present book has been paid to the significant happenings, events and developments in Kashmir, to a set of controversies, to Pakistan's emphasis on the military build-up, to China's involvement in the northern territory, and to Pakistan's efforts to cultivate different foreign sources. Several, indeed, are untold stories you will come across in the present book.

Sardar Kartar Singh of Jay Kay Book House offered without hesitation, and in the spirit of a friend, to undertake the speedy publication of the book. I owe thank to him.

B.L. KAK

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Loaves and Fishes

It was a scene of strife. The sad episode involved a Kashmiri newsman and a senior official of the intelligence wing of the Indian Border Security Force, better known as BSF (G). They were in a posh hotel in Srinagar, consuming whisky. They met after the sunset on 25 October 1984. They had occupied their seats in one of the corners of the bar. Barely 30 minutes of their entry into the bar they created a scene. Both of them traded abuses and tossed their glasses which had, after their second round of drinks, been filled by a waiter. The two glasses were broken as they hit the table and fell down. A part of the furniture, including the table-cover, was spoiled when whisky, mixed with soda, and two plates filled with fried potato chips and wafers fell down as the two persons grappled with each other in a fit of rage.

The BSF official was said to have been friendly with the hotel management. And as he had invited the newsman for an "informal" meeting over drinks, the waiter and his principals in the hotel kept quiet despite visible embarrassment caused to a few customers in the bar. The intelligence sleuth and his guest were tension-free as they travelled together to the hotel premises in a black ambassador car. Subjects taken up by them for a discussion until the end of the first round of their drinks were not of serious nature. But the situation did not remain static. Indeed, it assumed a different complexion altogether when they started their second round of whisky.

The newsman was disturbed when his host held the stick from a different end. The former had casually wanted to know the identity of those persons who had been secretly recruited as

"informers" of the latter in Srinagar. An element of misunderstanding was too evident to be missed when the BSF intelligence sleuth retorted by saying: "It is none of your business." Both of them took less than an hour to get separated from each other. The intelligence official had desired to cultivate his guest as an "informant". The latter had, before his unpleasant encounter with his host in the hotel, got an indication in connection with the "subtle" attempt by the former at increasing the number of his "agents" or "informers" in Srinagar and elsewhere in the Indian Kashmir. The newsman, professing Islam, had objected to what was described as "uncharitable" remarks made by the BSF official against some Muslim politicians of Kashmir.

The official felt out of sorts for a short while when his guest flung away in a rage. Curiously, his anger followed his reported protest against what was termed as "unwarranted" role played by the Indian intelligence agencies to "mislead innocent Kashmiris". The newsman did not wait for a precise answer to his question: "Is it true that several Kashmiris are missing after they had engaged themselves as informers or agents of different intelligence outfits in Kashmir"? Nor did he allow himself to be used by his host as an "informant". Reason: The newsman had, not long ago, come across the harrowing story about the brutal treatment meted out to a Kashmiri Hindu youth by the Pakistani authorities following his arrest on the other side of the border years ago. The arrested youth, Roshan Lal Jalla by name, landed himself in a Pakistani jail after he was enticed by two members of an Indian security agency in the Rajouri sector of the Jammu region to sneak into the occupied territory for spying.

The encounter—unexpected and unpleasant as it was—between the Hindu intelligence sleuth and Muslim newsman had taken place at a time when unfettered reports had insisted that several persons hailing from different parts of the Jammu and Kashmir State were missing after their unpublicised entry into different intelligence agencies as "informers" or "agents". Possibility of some of them having gone underground after their disassociation from the agencies they had worked for was not ruled out. Yet, absence of some others, whose identity had not been disclosed, gave rise to a set of misgivings, leading some

opposition groups in the Muslim-majority Kashmir to be critical of the Intelligence Bureau (IB), Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), BSF intelligence wing and Indian military intelligence, better known as M.I.

It was apparently in this context that the ebullient founder-President of the Kashmir People's Conference, Abdul Gani Lone, voiced his concern, on more than one occasion, at the "anti-Kashmiri" posture adopted by the Indian intelligence agencies. He even floated a suggestion favouring setting up of a suitable forum to organise public expression against the "involvement" of these agencies in attempts at alluring unspecified number of local people in parts of Jammu and Kashmir into risky acts of spying. Lone and likeminded politicians charged these agencies with attempts at misleading innocent persons by the show of "thick bundles of Indian currency notes" which, according to them, formed part of the unaccountable secret fund allocated to them (intelligence outfits) by the powers that be in New Delhi.

The story about the clandestine recruitment of some local people in Jammu and Kashmir by the intelligence outfits, including the State CID, as "informers" or "agents" was told by an aggrieved father after his son, alleged to have been engaged by India's premier intelligence outfit (RAW) as an "agent" did not return home. And enquiries by his father from a set of officials provided little relief to him as all those persons contacted by him had only one point to make: His son was "never" recruited by them. It was in March 1985 that a local Muslim, employed in a newspaper office in Srinagar disclosed, after his return from a brief visit to Pakistan-held "Azad Kashmir", that the "agent" had been lodged in a jail in Multan in Pakistan. Until the legendary figure of Kashmir politics, Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah, returned to power in February 1975 under an agreement with New Delhi, the number of Kashmiri "agents" and "informers" on the list of Intelligence Bureau alone was put at over 10,000.

But these figures got drastically changed in the subsequent years. Indeed, the intelligence outfits like the IB, RAW, BSF(G), CID and MI have been confronted with a peculiar problem arising from the unwillingness of many Kashmiris to engage

themselves in the risky acts of spying. Another reason—and, perhaps, genuine—responsible for the sharp decline in the number of “informers” and contact-men in Kashmir is attributed to the flow of money into Kashmir from several other channels. Existence of fantastic sums of black money in Jammu and Kashmir is not unknown. An increase in black money in several pockets of the State since early 1970s is having a shattering effect on the economy in spite of the fact that Jammu and Kashmir had made phenomenal progress on the economic and social fronts. The progress could have been larger if the authorities had encouraged positive measures to curb illicit trades. Interestingly, at the end of the 1985-86 financial year, it was estimated that over Rs. 8 crores entered the State annually through deals in the prohibited charas, or hashish, crop.

As the world-famous tourist centre, Kashmir is also deemed by many to be the rendezvous for good smugglers and international currency racketeers. Add to it the amounts that allegedly go into the black accounts of many of those who are engaged in forest and fruit trades. With some of them driving to-and-fro for a distance of 100 kilometres for afternoon tea in a posh Srinagar hotel is a normal routine. Even if it is estimated that these clandestine activities involve an amount of Rs. 10 crores annually, the extent of its unhealthy influence can be easily judged from the fact that the State, notwithstanding the development it has made over the years, depends on imports for everything from fodder to food. Kashmir which claims to have hit a growth rate of 8.2 per cent, is faced with acute paucity of resources to meet its mounting non-plan expenditure. The State politicians and planners have always been against undue taxation. However, the State's tax revenue comes from excise and sales tax. The former is levied on the sale of country liquor and whiskies and has formed the proverbial hen which lays golden eggs for the powers that be in Kashmir. The State authorities have, understandably, rejected pleas for imposition of prohibition. But that does not give the authorities licence to stretch it too far.

Like any irrational increase in sales tax, undue elasticity in excise has the danger of encouraging inter-state smuggling. It is true that the State does not have any kind of an elaborate

system of taxation as is found elsewhere. An opportunity to do so may become available after the tax on all professions and callings is collected for the creation of a social security fund to assist educated unemployed in setting up productive units. The levying of this tax could be a beginning in estimating personal incomes in a State where the concealment of incomes appears to have been the most menacing. The extent of real estate business and the momentum of construction activity are immediate indicators of the extent of concealment of incomes in Jammu and Kashmir. This may not sound palatable to the powers that be, for the persons involved are politicians, bureaucrats, engineers and others.

More than 3,000 families in Jammu and Kashmir are reported to have grown rich from early '60s as a result of the illegal trade in charas, a narcotic extracted from bhang. A survey conducted by an official agency revealed (before the end of 1985) that the trade in charas had formed an important facet of the life of many smugglers in the State. Scores of local people flourished in the illicit trade with the connivance of officials. All this happened in violation of the restrictions, under the existing law, on production and sale of charas or hashish. The official survey pointed out that a number of families had taken to business in handicrafts after they had earned lakhs of rupees from the clandestine smuggling of hashish.

Negligence on part of the State officials has resulted in the cultivation of bhang, the Indian hemp smoked or chewed as narcotic and intoxicant, in several hundred acres of land with assured irrigation in more than 70 villages. Police officials claimed that numerous steps taken against charas smugglers and bhang cultivators had made many a villager realize the importance of the land meant for rice and other crops. But, apart from the wild growth of bhang in the demarcated forests, cultivation of hemp plants in many river-side villages could not be totally stopped. Production of charas is a much more profitable proposition involving much less labour than cereal crops. In several areas of Kashmir, scores of villagers have already managed to convert land with assured irrigation facility either into orchards or terraced holdings used for bhang cultivation.

According to the official survey, first grade charas, called "attar", fetches about Rs. 15,000 a kilogram in Bombay while in the USA a kilogram of "attar" sells for about Rs. 45,000 as against nearly Rs. 35,000 for a kilogram in the Middle East. Huge earnings from the illegal trade coupled with unabated corruption in the State administration have resulted in the striking change in habits and social customs of a section of the population in the State.

A couple of instances in this connection can point to the existence of fantastic sums of black money in Jammu and Kashmir. A businessman invested several lakhs of rupees on the marriage of his daughter in Srinagar not long ago when, apart from other valuables, he presented a gold chain to the pet dog of his son-in-law. Another businessman, residing in Jammu, did not lag behind as he was reported to have presented to his son-in-law a cigarette case and an ash-tray made of gold, weighing about 150 grams. In the wake of Indo-Pakistan war in 1971 an old lady of a big business house in Srinagar engaged some of her trusted assistants in digging a trench inside her residential premises for concealing two large polythene bags containing black money of the order of Rs. 65 lakhs. Details of the incident became available after one of the assistants was sacked at the end of the war.

An open secret is the phenomenal increase in black money in Jammu and Kashmir since mid-sixties. The increase has also been the product of the clandestine flow of undisclosed amounts of money into the State from across the border. Several political activists have, according to the Intelligence Bureau, thrived on material support extended to them, from time to time, by some of those who possessed huge sums of black money. A sample survey carried out by a team of IB sleuths in parts of the State revealed that as scores of serving and retired officials had been "largely benefited by the quiet circulation of a portion of black money" it would be difficult for the powers that be to uncover concealed money and gold and other precious stones. The IB survey maintained: "That black money to the tune of several crores exist in the State can be explained by the unusual momentum of construction activity especially in the Kashmir Valley. Some smugglers and international currency racketers have been found tension-free, for they have managed

to be friendly with influential politicians and bureaucrats in the State". The survey contained a sensational account of how a senior engineer had donated about Rs. 5 lakhs as his "first instalment" to the National Conference party when Sheikh Abdullah, as the State Chief Minister, fielded his candidates against the Congress(I) party in Kashmir in the 1977 elections to the State Legislative Assembly. Another instance cited was that of the "fantastic fortune" built by at least half a dozen police officials "in a period of less than two years" while conniving at the clandestine activities of some hashish smugglers and international currency racketers in the State.

Kashmir's police chief, M.M. Khajooria, had strong reasons when, in February 1985, he refused to support the law against hashish smugglers and drug pedlars. He favoured the term of imprisonment to be enhanced to ten years instead of two years. For this, he called for necessary amendments in the State's Excise Act to make cultivation of bhang and possession of hashish a cognizable offence. Khajooria's demand was followed by a sensational prediction: "Ten years hence, a wholesale destruction of moral values in the Indian society will become unavoidable if the powers that be in Delhi failed to take cognizance of the altered, or altering, situation in the first place and, secondly, allowed a delay in bringing about radical changes in the existing laws against those involved in flesh trade and procurement and sale of various kinds of narcotics and dangerous drugs. India's rich cultural heritage, vouched for by history, will fall into the limbo of oblivion if the concerned authorities avoided taking of suitable measures, sooner than later, to introduce harsher laws to do away with the evils flowing from the unabated flesh trade and rising number of narcotic pedlars."

The prediction was made by a Kashmiri police official, Javed Makhdoomi, after his extensive investigations not only in parts of north Indian States but also in several areas in western, eastern and north-eastern States between 1979 and 1985. Happily for Makhdoomi, majority of the members of India's Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) had also been reported to have warned the authorities of serious consequences if harsher laws were not introduced to combat the "growing threat" from

those involved in the flesh trade and procurement and sale of various kinds of narcotics in the region, including Indian Kashmir. That Makhdoomi had set the ball rolling was explained by the manner in which he began, since the beginning of 1985, advocating the need for changes in the two laws, known as suppression of immoral traffic and women act and dangerous drug act. The two acts had to be amended in a manner as to enhance the period of detention for the accused for ten years instead of three years.

Two developments had, before Khajooria and Makhdoomi voiced their demands, taken place on the Kashmir scene. First, of course, was the product of many a hand behind the flesh trade. An account of the involvement of some political leaders and legislators of West Bengal and Tripura in attempts at encouraging sale-girl business in Kashmir was contained in a report prepared by the crime branch of Jammu and Kashmir police force. Details like the identity of "mercenary" politicians and their party affiliation had, of course, been made available to the police with the arrest of about a dozen Bengali pimps in Srinagar, Badgam and Baramulla. And those involved in immoral trafficking in girls owed their allegiance either to the Communist Party (Marxist) or to the Congress(I) in the two States. The report prepared by the crime branch on what was described as "a sensational case" involving a set of Bengalis and Kashmiris in the "lucrative" sale-girl business pointed out that nearly 3,500 Bengali girls, 15 of them of Bangladesh origin, had been sold in different parts of Kashmir from 1978 to the end of 1985. Each victim was sold to the Kashmiri pimps for Rs. 3,000 as first-hand price which, on re-sale, would fetch Rs. 10,000 to Rs 15,000.

Another development was worth watching more for the characters it involved than for half-hearted remedial measures adopted by the authorities in Kashmir. A product of Afghanistan became the subject for discussion almost everywhere—among the official and non-official circles—in Kashmir during the first quarter of 1985. Afghanistan product: brown sugar, an item clandestinely smuggled into the Muslim-majority Kashmir from across the border. Production of brown sugar in Baluchistan and North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan

and Afghanistan, it is not unknown, has been going on for years. And its surreptitious flow into Kashmir became an open secret when the Kashmir police claimed to have unearthed a well-knit racket of smugglers involved in the illegal trade in powder-like substance, brown sugar. At least 30 persons including two Afghan nationals were apprehended.

Brown sugar is consumed as a narcotic; it is heavy in weight, pink in colour and without smell. Yet it gives a hard kick to its consumers in the beginning, generally depriving them of their sense of morality. Interesting, of course, was a piece of information ferreted out by one of the detained Afghan nationals. According to him, brown sugar was prepared in Pakistan for the Russian soldiers in Afghanistan. The main aim of Pakistan was to make the Soviet soldiers habitual of the powdered narcotic so as to divert their attention from the war against the Afghan rebels. As long as anybody can remember illicit drugs have been on open sale in the largely unpoliced tribal territory near the Khyber Pass, for the writ of the Pakistani police, like the British before them, does not run much beyond the main roads. The Pathan tribesmen who wander freely across the Durand Line that marks the frontier between Pakistan and Afghanistan make owe laws and do not take gladly to other people's.

The Khyber is one of the world famous gateways of the frontier which figures in history as a corridor of invasion and commerce between the Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent. It lies across the passage of countless invaders, including world-shaking names like those of Alexander, Ghengiz Khan and Tamerlane, the most famous conquerors in all history. At the smugglers' market town of Landi Kotal, at the height of the Khyber Pass eight kilometres east of the border, Pakistani authorities have already confessed their impotence. Indeed, the turbaned stall holders of the town have been dealing in something new. They call it brown sugar, to which it bears a cursory resemblance, and it is opium refined to the point where it is very close to becoming heroin. The United States Drug Enforcement Agency has estimated that between 30 and 40 per cent of the illicit heroin being smuggled into America came from—what its officials called the Golden Crescent—Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Growth of primitive laboratories around the Khyber has not been disputed even by the Pakistani authorities. Narcotics investigators estimate that as many as 20, which are refining opium into heroin and thereby making it much easier to smuggle. The pounds of opium make a pound of heroin. Brown sugar, which is not pure enough for injection and addicts smoke in a style known as "chasing the dragon", is the crudest product of these bathtub laboratories. These frontier laboratories are simple to equip—little more than some basic plumbing and a bunsen burner is needed—and difficult to detect since they are often set up on the backs of lorries ready to move off at a moment's notice. American and European drug dealers, who have long regarded Pakistan as a useful source of hashish which grows wild in most parts of the country, may well be responsible for instructing these Pathan chemists and financing their initial outlay. Certainly, the big pushers and their agents did not take long to realize their potential.

2

Threatening Clouds

Kashmir is not what it was until the end of the 1971 war between India and Pakistan. And the change is noticeable in the Kashmiri countenances and in the altered or altering landscape. In the mercurial world of Kashmir politics? Much has, indeed, happened after the Kashmir dispute, as it arose in 1947, was regarded as a product of the political history of the Indian subcontinent. The tangled skein of Kashmir politics and the existence of the Kashmir dispute as the major irritant between India and Pakistan have, undoubtedly, led external influences to flow into the State of Jammu and Kashmir. That the activity of unspecified number of individuals and groups has been influenced by such influences is not refuted even by official circles in Srinagar and New Delhi.

In other words, the existence of groups in Jammu and Kashmir in favour of Pakistan, America, Russia and China is not unknown. Pro-China patriots, whose number is much more smaller than the Soviet agents and sympathisers, wield limited influence and that too in a few villages in Hindu-majority Jammu region. While the existence of a pro-Russian lobby in Kashmir became an open secret after the Indo-Pak war in 1965, Americans, especially those manning the US Embassy in Delhi and other centres run by Washington in the rest of India, began to evince interest, openly, in Kashmir from the middle of 1977. Any non-Kashmiri visitor is welcome to Kashmir, a place of tourist interest as it is. Even those working for America's CIA, Russia's KGB and Britain's secret servicemen are welcome to the State. Those who cater to the requirements of foreigners in the State are apparently not keen to study or determine

the nature or the intention of the visitors. Profit motive has, perhaps, been the only criterion for majority of those dealing, directly or indirectly, with tourists and trekkers.

Traditional form of vigilance on foreigners in Kashmir witnessed a change—indeed, it was lowered—after Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah returned to power in February 1975. Reason: Sheikh Abdullah, known to his numerous supporters as the “Lion of Kashmir”, had opposed steps which, in his opinion, resulted in unnecessary embarrassment to a foreigner in the homeland of the Kashmiris. The Sheikh was pro-West and anti-Communists. He encouraged attempts at attracting more and more visitors from various foreign countries, especially the United States, France, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, United Arab Republic and United Arab Emirates, to his homeland, Kashmir. The Sheikh’s anger against the Soviets was too obvious to be missed after the Russian troops marched into Afghanistan. That was the time when he pointed out that the origin of the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan lay in Moscow’s fear of a possible revolt in the Muslim-dominated Soviet republics like Azaerbaijan and Tajikistan following “revival of Islam” there since early 1970s. Moscow’s action in Afghanistan, according to him, was guided by its anxiety to safeguard its interests in its Central Asian empire populated mainly by Muslims.

Like the Sheikh, thousands of Kashmiri Muslims berated the Soviet Union for its military intervention in Afghanistan. There was no alternative for the Soviet Union except, of course, to strike militarily. Moscow was apprehensive that Islamic propaganda, launched by Pakistan, might reach the Central Asian countries through Afghanistan, harming its interests, and was, therefore, keen to prevent any such development and wanted to have a government in Afghanistan which should be one hundred per cent pro-Moscow. The Afghan crisis had figured prominently in the 77-member Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly following the Soviet military intervention in December 1979. Nearly a dozen legislators had demanded the Soviet pullout from Afghanistan and a solution precluding the possibility of an armed clash between the two super powers on “our soil”. Sheikh

Abdullah’s strident remarks on the issue stood in conflict with that of government of India which maintained that the Russian action could not be treated in isolation. Abdullah thundered as he maintained that no country in the world supported the Russian action in Afghanistan. But in a calculated move to avoid any confrontation with New Delhi, he said: “The line adopted by Indira Gandhi is right and we should do nothing different from that.”

Freedom enjoyed by the Russians in Kashmir as tourists, researchers and observers has by no means been limited; fact of the matter is that the Russians have already established a well-knit lobby in support of Moscow’s ideology and actions. With pro-Pakistan sentiment having got accentuated in Kashmir over the years, many Muslims have, on more than one occasion, expressed fears that Russia, after Afghanistan, might enter Pakistan, set up a government in Baluchistan in order to reach warm waters of Indian Ocean and control the oil-rich Persian Gulf. Kashmiris, by and large, are not bothered by the reported expansionist moves of China. Reason: China has proved herself as a strong supporter of Pakistan. It is apparently in this context that the Kashmiri Muslims have ignored Beijing’s interest in the Indian Ocean. China did not appear to be involved in the Indian Ocean to any substantial degree until the first quarter of 1974. Precisely, on July 11, 1974, a three-member study team, appointed by the U.N. Secretary General, brought to the fore the nature and size of the installations of the two super powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, in the smallest of the world’s oceans, better known as the Indian Ocean. An academician from Sweden, a former admiral of Iran and an administrator from India studied, in depth, the situation in and around the Indian Ocean before they were able to list the military and naval establishments in the region of the permanent members of the Security Council. Judged by their revised report, China lagged behind—indeed, the three researchers did not come across the real threat from yet another Communist giant, China.

Did these researchers anticipate Beijing’s strategic priorities in the Indian Ocean? An answer to this question is not far to seek. The three-member study team had been astonished

by the size and structure of the installations of the two super powers and, as such, could not avoid making a detailed description about the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union. With the publication of the team's report, China injected a new element into the situation, making clear Beijing's intention to go ahead in the context of the unwillingness by the Soviets, the Americans and others to withdraw from the Indian Ocean. Increasing global interest in the Indian Ocean could not be concealed as, in the first place, the three-member study team's report formally catalogued military and naval installations in the region and, secondly, it led to the emergence of a certain divergence of view both among the major powers and littoral states. Interesting, indeed, was the comment from Beijing's representative. The Indian Ocean, according to him, could be a zone of peace only if steps were taken to "put an end to the two super powers' military expansion and contention for hegemony in the region". And with the failure of the United Nations and of the non-aligned countries to bring about the withdrawal of all foreign naval fleets and liquidation of military bases and installations in the area, China was left with no alternative but to refer to its strategic priorities in and around the Indian Ocean.

In the absence of a common strategy among the littorals and the super powers in the Indian Ocean, China got an opportunity to make advances, though in a phased manner. Indeed, Beijing hesitated to wait for the outcome of the search by the United Nations for formal discussions with the United States and the Soviet Union on the question of making the Indian Ocean a zone of peace and formulating a common minimum programme for action between the littorals and the super powers. The situation, as it obtained in 1974, has considerably changed. For the Chinese in Tibet and the Soviets in Turkistan, Indian Ocean comes within normal missile range. The Soviet range could be Diego Garcia and for Chinese medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBMs) almost anywhere in India. Beijing is said to have drawn up a plan to use the southern part of the Indian Ocean as testing ground or target areas for ICBMs launched from Sinkiang or Tibet, across Kashmir. Competent observers have, in this connection, referred to the Chinese

interest in Tanzania. According to one U.N. document, China has already transferred equipment to Tanzania and has assisted that country in the construction of a dockyard at Kigamboni. The Indian Ocean is that part of the world ocean that lies south of Asia and between Africa and Australia, extending south to Antarctica.

The Chinese presence in East Africa as a result of the Tanzam railway is not without significance. A much more important development has arisen from their plan designed, as it is, to help the Tanzanian Navy build up its fleet. Chinese are manoeuvring to a position from where they can exercise influence of the East-Central Indian Ocean. This may induce a new element in the situation in view of the location of Zanzibar just opposite Diego Garcia. The area between Zanzibar and Diego Garcia is an important sector encompassing Seychelles and the Aldabra and Amirante islands of the British Indian Ocean territory. Without any fanfare, Chinese have, after establishing their foothold in Tanzania, brought about an equally significant change: provision of Chinese satellite tracking facilities in Tanzania and development of a missile tracking ship and a missile recovery ship in the Indian Ocean.

The re-assertion of non-alignment as an enlightened perception for an interdependent community of nations has already marked the restoration of principled behaviour in the conduct of India's foreign policy. India has not minimised the role and responsibility of great powers. India has, while adhering to non-alignment, brought about an improvement in her relations with the great powers without being drawn into differences between them or getting involved in issues which exacerbate international tensions. New Delhi is committed to its plan for organising public opinion at home and abroad for making the Indian Ocean a zone of peace. At the same time, however, India does not want to stir up host of enemies by only pointing to the non-Soviet bases in the Indian Ocean. Knowing that the island state of Maldives is of much importance for the United States, India cannot afford to ignore attempts being made to improve relations between Washington and Beijing on the one hand and, on the other, behind-the-scene search launched by the Chinese for a kind of favour from the Maldives which, in the

ultimate analysis, would enable Beijing to assert itself in the Central Indian Ocean.

Encirclement of India by China can be expected only when the Chinese are allowed to enter the Maldives. Although Soviet interest in the Indian Ocean run contrary to Indian objectives, Soviet security interests in India are largely oriented in containing China. With the strengthening of its fortifications for offensive and defensive actions in the region by moving into Tibet and maintaining friendly relationship with Pakistan, China has already hinted at a scheme of things intended to utilise the India Ocean for the half-circle around the belly of the Soviet Union. Obviously because of the heavy weapon concentration by China along the disputed portions of the Sino-Soviet border, the Russians have strong reasons to cultivate some strategic island republics especially the Maldives as part of the Soviet plan to create difficulties for the Chinese in the region. As the area of heavy Soviet and Chinese weapon concentration lies north of the Central Indian Ocean, further changes in the strategic priorities of these two countries and of other major powers, including the United States and Britain, cannot be ruled out. "Let China sleep", Napoleon remarked in 1809, "when she awakes, the whole world will be sorry". Today, China is awake. Her activities in the Indian Ocean, for example, are as important as those of other major powers and can, in more than one respect, decide the future of Afro-Asia and Australia with the passage of time.

Pro-American lobby in Kashmir has significantly, been influenced by those who, not long ago, referred to the "will" of Peter the Great, which was published in 1775. There the advice for future Russian rulers was: "Approach as near as possible to Constantinople and India. Consequently, excite continual wars, not only in Turkey but also in Persia. Establish dockyards on the Black Sea.... In the defence of Persia, penetrate as far as the Persian Gulf, re-establish, if it be possible, the ancient commerce with Levant, advance as far as India, which is the depot of the world. Arrived at this spot, we shall no longer have need of England's gold." Official statistics available with the Kashmir tourism department have substantiated reports about a rapid increase in the number of American tourists to the State since

the middle of 1977. A number of them made it a point to undertake a trip to Ladakh in east of Kashmir. The mountainous region of Ladakh has aroused considerable global interest, especially from the Russians and the Americans, no less than the Chinese, for its militarily-strategic importance. Lying, as it does, close to Pakistan, China, Tibet, Afghanistan and Russia constituting a region which witnessed dramatic developments starting off with the Communist takeover in Kabul, Ladakh has emerged as an attractive tourist spot beckoning travellers and mountaineers from as far as the United States and Britain in the West and Japan in the East.

Beijing is known to have shown much interest in Ladakh for quite some time. And according to official reports in Srinagar, the Chinese government circulated, on more than one occasion from 1983 to the middle of 1985, maps showing more than half of this frontier region of India, extending to the 11,500-foot-high Zojila mountain pass, as part of China. Beijing, apparently, sought to back its claim, stoutly contested by New Delhi, with her invasion of Ladakh in 1962 when the Chinese troops overran parts of the territory and are still occupying them. But the Soviet Union, too, has begun to evince interest in this northern-most region of India. Moscow's prime concern appears to be to cry a halt to any Chinese attempts to extend their influence in and around Ladakh. Observers in Srinagar link the growing Russian and American interest to the none-too-old happenings in the region around Ladakh which expressed themselves in the induction of a Communist regime in Afghanistan and the increasing Sino-Pak collaboration and co-operation in military, political and economic affairs, the latter, apparently, intended immediately to counter any moves by Moscow to spread its net beyond Kabul and achieve its cherished objectives of reaching the shores of the Arabian Sea through Pakistan.

An element of perturbation among the official circles in Ladakh became an open secret during my informal chat with some senior Indian military personnel in Kargil and Leh sectors in July 1985. They pointed out that the process of normalisation of relations between India and China could be affected if the latter's troops, stationed close to the Ladakh border, tried

to attach little importance to the agreement between the two sides on the mode and method for carrying out survey along the border with Tibet. The agreement makes its necessary for Indian and Chinese border troops to inform each other before starting survey along the international boundary in Ladakh. And the agreement, as it is, has been regarded by the government of India as a step designed to generate the spirit of cooperation between the armies of the two countries and, as such, to be modified or amended through bilateral negotiations. The official circles also pointed out that, in spite of the Indians' attempts to preserve peace and promote cooperation with China, the Indian defence authorities had not taken well the manner in which groups of Chinese tried to underrate the "importance" of the agreement. An example, in this connection, was cited by a senior official of the Indian Army at Leh following a couple of incidents of border and air violations by China and unauthorised entry by some of her defence personnel into the Indian territory near Daulat Beg Ouldi in Ladakh in the course of the reported survey by them along the international boundary.

China is bigger than India in size and population. And China is militarily stronger than India. How effective the Indian defences on the Ladakh border are, depends not only on what the Indians do but also on what the Chinese do on the other side of the mountains. It is true that India has increased the number of her troops several-fold since 1962. But the gap between the Indian and Chinese military strength is perhaps still sizeable. Ladakh is still as formidable and inhospitable as it was in 1962. The Chinese have established over a dozen new posts close to the Indo-Tibetan border in Ladakh. Establishment of these military posts has been reported along the Kailash range across Demchok and Demchok-Chip Chap river bulge. The areas where the Chinese have concentrated appear to be the ones situated close to the Chip Chap, Karakash and the Glawan valleys. China's second artillery, controlling the nuclear missile force, has already deployed missiles with the range of 500 to 1,500 nautical miles in Tibet and added unspecified number of land-based tactical missiles to the weapons in some parts of Sinkiang. The Kashmir State has the most diverse peoples

as its neighbours. In the north across the mountains is Sinkiang, in the east is Tibet, in the west stand Afghanistan and North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan. Kashmir's proximity to Russia—and now China—makes the question of the State's security important.

Beijing has been busy improving its relations with its immediate neighbours since the new leadership came to power in China. Whether this is indicative of China's future line of approach towards India also has yet to be established, as China continues to support Pakistan on the Kashmir dispute and assist Islamabad in strengthening its defence shield. There cannot be complete understanding between India and China unless the question of Indian territory in possession of China is settled. As far as the Aksai Chin area is concerned, China would like to retain it in spite of the pressure or appeals from any quarter. The Aksai Chin area, through which the Chinese have constructed a highway, is important to Beijing because this serves as the only link between Chinese-held Sinkiang and Tibet. India's border with China is 2,500 miles long, divided into three sectors: eastern, middle and western. The border issue, which has remained frozen for over two decades, is complex. The issue can be solved in a spirit of give and take. As the only obstacle between India and China in developing friendly relations is the border dispute, it would be useful for New Delhi and Beijing to come to grips with the dispute in a spirit of give and take.

It is not unknown that as part of her strategy for expansion, China has kept her men busy in Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan and Burma, and has been referring, though not frequently, to Ladakh being a part of Chinese Tibet and Sikkim's "illegal" merger with the Indian Union. China's involvement in encouraging unspecified number of espionage and guerrilla training centres in Pakistan and Pakistan-held "Azad Kashmir" is not unknown to New Delhi. It is well known that Pakistan has been the largest recipient of Chinese military aid in the non-Communist world. China signed its first economic aid programme with Pakistan in 1964, and its military assistance programme was extended to Pakistan in September 1965 in the wake of the Indo-Pak war. China found it easy to develop friendly

relations with Pakistan following the two important developments: Moscow's presentation in consistent words of a fact during 1955-56 that Russia's interest in Asia was no less than China's, and the resentment by Pakistani press and politicians against the Soviet Union's support to India on Kashmir.

With the passage of time, Beijing put forward, for Asia, its own concept of "proletarian hegemony" among revolutionary classes. It is improbable that Moscow would surrender to Beijing complete direction of the Japanese or Indian Communist parties or making of Communist policy toward these areas, although Beijing almost certainly has received some voice in the matter. Russia's power interests there have been significant. Despite Beijing's salvage of North Korea with Chinese blood, distinct Soviet line of authority persists there. And in the long run, Japan and India are vastly more important than Korea and Indo-China. There has been, over the years, little doubt about the Chinese intention to prevent any other power from developing positions on some countries in Southern and Eastern Asia. They include India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Japan and Korea.

With Chinese troops only about 100 miles away from Leh, people of Ladakh, by and large, do not hesitate to express their concern over China's unabated interest in the strategic trans-Himalayan region. These Ladakhis, especially Buddhist, smart under the impression that Chinese leaders continue to believe that expansion of their country "is the only thing which must be kept in view regardless of any other consideration".

3

The Lust of Conquest

The decade that was : 1972 to 1982. March of events during and after the 14-day war between India and Pakistan in 1971 became too obvious to be missed. Following the dramatic announcement of the Simla agreement on 2 July 1972, a situation was created to enable India and Pakistan to bring about normalisation of relations between the two countries. And although Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Premier, and Z.A. Bhutto of Pakistan did not make any reference, publicly, to the unwritten understanding between them over the future of Jammu and Kashmir, some political circles in Pakistan and Indian Kashmir, too, sought immediate measures to get the chosen representatives of the two sides associated with the Indo-Pak talks on the Kashmir issue. The unwritten understanding between Bhutto and Mrs. Gandhi had favoured a solution not to drastically disturb the political arrangement in Kashmir and Pakistan-held "Azad Kashmir".

In Pakistan, statements were issued by the Liberation League and Plebiscite Front against "attempts" at seeking a division of Jammu and Kashmir without ascertaining wishes of the people of Kashmir. In Kashmir, Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah pleaded for an early settlement of the Kashmir issue on the basis of the wishes of the Kashmiris. He told a big public meeting at Sopore, 32 miles from Srinagar, on 4 July that neither Bhutto nor Mrs. Gandhi had the right to hammer out a solution of the Kashmir problem without associating the people of Kashmir with any kind of talks on the matter. That was the time when Abdullah-backed Plebiscite Front argued that one of the logical

results from the Simla conference had been acceptance of the Kashmir dispute by India and Pakistan. The causes of conflict between India and Pakistan came to be regarded bigger than men during the course of talks between Mrs. Gandhi and Pakistan's President Bhutto at Simla in July 1972.

Tension mounted in the Indian and Pakistani camps at Simla when Indira Gandhi refused to accept Bhutto's suggestion for reduction of the number of Indian troops on the Indo-Pak border and for the stoppage of New Delhi's search for sophisticated weapons until Pakistan was able to procure additional equipment to plug the gaps in Islamabad's defence shield. Secret intervention by Russia saved the situation; arrival of a Russian emissary in Simla quietly with Premier Kosygin's message for Bhutto and Mrs. Gandhi was followed by the signing of an agreement by the two leaders. Sheikh Abdullah was not in his homeland when the 14-day war was fought by the armies of India and Pakistan. In January 1971, he and two leaders of the Kashmir Plebiscite Front were externed from the State in the course of a government crackdown on secessionists, followed up with the arrest of about 500 workers of the Front in different parts of Kashmir and Doda district in the Jammu region. Externment orders were served on Abdullah and his son-in-law, G.M. Shah, at their New Delhi residence on 9 January. Front President, Mirza Afzal Beg, had been served with a similar order while he was on his way to Srinagar from Jammu by road. Abdullah forced to abandon his return to Srinagar on 8 January following the cancellation of his flight due to a bomb scare. The externment orders were made under the public security law, while the arrests were made under the preventive detention act.

Soon after the end of the Indo-Pak war in 1971 a change was noticed in the attitude of Sheikh Abdullah towards New Delhi. Happily for the ruling Congress party in Delhi, the Sheikh began to change himself. Indeed, he was convinced by the fact that India had emerged as a stronger country in the subcontinent. He began to realise that Indira Gandhi, victorious and determined as she appeared after the war, and especially after the dismemberment of East Pakistan (now known as Bangladesh) from West Pakistan, would not hesitate to curb

and control him. The death of then Chief Minister of Kashmir, G.M. Sadiq, in Chandigarh in December 1971 had also altered the situation; New Delhi bureaucrats had found Sadiq's successor, Mir Qasim, submissive. After the end of war, Abdullah's chief lieutenant, Afzal Beg, issued a statement in which he had *inter alia* asserted that the question of internal autonomy for Kashmir was a matter of discussion between the people of the State and government of India and Pakistan had nothing to do with it. "The fact of State's accession (to India) was irrelevant to us because we have lent our support to the Instrument of Accession of 1947 with all its implications", Beg said.

Sheikh Abdullah's none-too-rigid posture helped Moscow as well as some Indian leaders in convincing Indira Gandhi on the need for a dialogue with the Kashmir leader. Indeed, in March 1972, Abdullah was reported to have met a Russian emissary in Delhi to seek the Soviet mediation for ending the deadlock between him and the government of India. Indirect part played by some Russian leaders, including Premier Kosygin, in reducing the tension between the two sides was followed by informal meetings Abdullah had, in the first place, with P.N. Dhar and P.N. Haksar, two trusted men of the Indian Prime Minister, and later with Mrs. Gandhi in the Indian capital. G.M. Karra, President of the Kashmir Political Conference, also played a notable part in bringing Abdullah closer to Mrs. Gandhi. On his return to Srinagar on 19 June—about 18 months after his externment from the State—Abdullah told newsmen that he hoped a new leaf would be turned in the relations between Kashmir and India. He said: "The Prime Minister desired that we should turn a new leaf in the Indo-Kashmir relations and forget what happened in the past. Certainly I could not say 'no' to that". He stressed that his talks with Mrs. Gandhi were not on an official level. "We are old friends and, naturally, our talks were on that level. We revived old memories and, incidentally, we talked about the situation in Kashmir", he added.

As Mrs. Gandhi and Abdullah did not want to make haste on the question of seeking a settlement between them, it was decided to evolve a system to help the two sides examine, in

depth, the possibility of a settlement. The job was assigned to G. Parthasarathi and Afzal Beg. The former acted as Mrs. Gandhi's emissary, while the latter operated as Abdullah's representative. Negotiations between the two sides had assumed much importance in the context of Abdullah's announcement that he favoured Kashmir's permanent link with the Indian Union and that he wanted maximum autonomy for the State with only Defence, Foreign Affairs and Communications being the Centre's responsibility. In the beginning of 1973, the pro-Pakistan militants in Kashmir began reorganising themselves to defeat Abdullah's move for a settlement with New Delhi. They accused the Kashmir leader of having gone back on the self-determination commitment and betrayed the Kashmiris. They did not want him to decide about the fate of the Kashmiris without their consent.

Political groups, such as Awami Action Committee, Jamat-i-Islami, Ittehadul Muslimeen and Tableegul Islam, were opposed to Abdullah's new Kashmir line. Leaders of these groups stressed that Abdullah had not been authorised by the Kashmir population to seek a settlement of the Kashmir problem with the government of India. After the announcement of negotiations between Parthasarathi and Beg, Abdullah made a strategic move: he held the stick from a different end to ensure that the opponents of his new Kashmir line did not embarrass his followers. In May and June 1973, he was found, more often than not, making it clear that he had dedicated his life to the cause of the Kashmir freedom. "I may not be able to achieve the goal in my life, but I shall, until my death, work for it", he told a meeting of the Plebiscite Front workers in Srinagar in June. His statement came in the wake of growing criticism in the Muslim-majority Kashmir that, by agreeing to hold talks with New Delhi for a settlement envisaging Kashmir's permanent link with India in return for its autonomy and his personal power, Abdullah had gone back on his slogan that he would secure for the Kashmiris their right to decide, in a U.N. guaranteed plebiscite, whether they wanted to remain with India or join Pakistan, or die striving for it.

Previously too, towards the end of 1972, Abdullah told a couple of public meetings that he was ill and that he had chosen

Afzal Beg as his political successor. While the ruling Congressmen in the State did not want Abdullah's return to power, many local Muslims did not see eye to eye with Kashmir leader's fresh adventure to achieve "his own ends behind the back of the State people". The Congressmen lacked courage to face Indira Gandhi. They also failed to sabotage the negotiations. Majority of the Muslim opponents of Abdullah also failed to pose a threat or challenge to the Kashmir leader. Abdullah and Afzal Beg had made it clear to Parthasarathi that the pro-India line, adopted by them, could be carried forward in Kashmir only with the help of certain instruments. These instruments, as argued by Abdullah himself, could be available only through political power. Some difficulties experienced during the Beg-Parthasarathi parleys notwithstanding, Abdullah looked happy over the pace and progress of his talks with Mrs. Gandhi on Kashmir. In 1974, he did not refute reports that there was a clear understanding, though unwritten, between him and Indira Gandhi on two issues.

First, personal equation between him and Mrs. Gandhi would not be allowed to get disturbed. Second, a good deal of caution would be exercised and rigid postures abandoned during the course of talks on Kashmir. The protracted negotiations lasted over two years. As these negotiations progressed, the Kashmiris were not taken into confidence. The deal over the future political set-up in Kashmir was struck in early 1975. The agreement put down in the shape of an accord between Sheikh Abdullah and Indira Gandhi was known as Kashmir Accord. It was presented to the Indian Parliament along with all the relevant correspondence on 24 February 1975. Before he was installed the State's Chief Minister, in place of Mir Qasim, on 25 February, Abdullah referred to the Kashmir Accord and said: "Basically what has been achieved is a re-establishment of trust and confidence born out of shared ideals and common objectives of the kind which was there all through until 1953." In a statement issued in Jammu on 24 February, he endorsed Afzal Beg's views that the happy developments "arising out of this dialogue with the Prime Minister and her colleagues provide a changed context in which plebiscite as a means to achieve

the goal of the party (Plebiscite Front) has been rendered irrelevant".

Abdullah and his associates had proved, beyond any doubt, that their aim was to secure political power. They got the power; New Delhi, too, had registered a significant achievement: with Abdullah's return to power, the sharp edge of the ferocity of anti-India groups was blunted with one stroke. Abdullah assisted by Beg assumed power with the support of the majority Congress Legislature party in the State. While in Pakistan the ruling politicians, especially Z.A. Bhutto, voiced their concern at the political alliance between Abdullah and New Delhi "without having ascertained the wishes of the Kashmiris", the pro-plebiscite groups in Kashmir wanted the Kashmir leader to refer the terms of agreement between him and Mrs. Gandhi to the people in Kashmir for their approval. And when the Kashmir Accord was published, Abdullah repeatedly assured the people in his public utterances that he was bound to get it approved by the State people. His assurance was not implemented; perhaps he had anticipated that if he ventured to get the Kashmir Accord approved by the Kashmiris at any stage the outcome would not have suited his requirements and scheme of things.

The Centre-Sheikh agreement and the consequent changes in the State administration had created an unprecedented, and potentially embarrassing, situation for the Congress party. It had an overwhelming majority in the legislature but was not running the government. Nor could it assume the functions of an opposition party, for its general ideology and objectives were the same as those of Abdullah. With the passage of time, the two sides began to accuse each other even during the emergency which was promulgated in India in June 1975. After the emergency was lifted, a big change occurred on the Indian political scene: Mrs. Gandhi was humbled by the Indian electorates during the elections to the Lok Sabha in March 1977. Fall of Mrs. Gandhi's government paved the way for the formation of the non-Congress government at Delhi with Morarji Desai as the Prime Minister. The Congress legislature party in the State Legislative Assembly which was the mainstay of the Abdullah government lost faith in its honesty and capability. The leader

of the party, G.L. Dogra, criticising the government, declared in a statement on 25 March:

"The economic condition of the common man has not improved. On the contrary it has deteriorated. Instead of the secular forces working in unison to defeat reaction and communalism, the government has functioned in a manner which has led to erosion of values we cherish. Keeping in view the democratic norms and also the fact that the Congress Legislature Party enjoys a clear majority in the Assembly, we would be failing in our duty if we do not fulfil our responsibility to serve the people of the State effectively, and be responsive to their aspirations."

The State Chief Minister, Sheikh Abdullah, advised the Governor, L.K. Jha, to dissolve the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly and order fresh elections, soon after Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, President of Pradesh Congress Committee, sent a letter to Jha on 26 March, withdrawing support of his party to the Abdullah government. Mufti Sayeed's demand for grant of permission to his party to form a new ministry on the basis of the party's strength in the Legislative Assembly was not conceded. The Indian Prime Minister Desai and some of his close associates stood in the way; in the first place, they were opposed to the question of setting up of pro-Indira Gandhi government in the State and, secondly, they had guessed that fresh polls might facilitate the State unit of Janata Party to form a new ministry. Happily for them, Governor Jha took shelter under Section 92 of the Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir and ordered the dissolution of the Assembly and imposed Governor's rule on the State for a period of six months.

Before the electorate went to the poll on 30 June and 3 July 1977, top Central leaders, including Morarji Desai, Jagjivan Ram and Charan Singh, visited Kashmir in a bid to build support for the State Janata Party. Their utterances against Sheikh Abdullah and his party did not prove helpful for the Janata Party. Notwithstanding the crushing defeat inflicted on the Janata Party during the elections, Morarji's image went high in

Kashmir for his initiative in having ensured fair elections for the first time after India's independence. Sheikh Abdullah formed his government soon after his triumph in the elections. In spite of the landslide victory, Abdullah could not find himself tension free. As he came to know about Afzal Beg's altered or altering attitude towards him, his apathy to the camp led by the latter became an open secret. The Sheikh, who demonstrated his determination on more than one occasion to fight those who tried to challenge his authority or endanger his government, showed no pity as he struck Beg towards the end of September 1978.

Afzal Beg was in Delhi to represent his political guru (the Sheikh) at the Chief Ministers' conference when a new leaf was added to the State's political history by Sheikh Abdullah on 22 September when, in a bid to combat revolt and check defections in the party in power, he made the members of his ministry to take an oath in the name of God that they would remain loyal to him and to the party (National Conference). The ceremony which followed the Sheikh's announcement of the reshuffle of portfolios among the members of the council of ministers, was apparently designed to ensure safety for the Chief Minister against the threat to his government. The Sheikh identified Beg as the star-hero of the gang of ambitious men who, he asserted, had been motivated by the desire to run him down by re-enacting the drama of 1953 when he (the Sheikh) was dismissed and detained. Sheikh Abdullah left little room for Beg to try for a compromise when, shortly after the 70-minute meeting with him on 25 September, the latter was asked to resign from the cabinet. As an associate of the Sheikh for over four decades, Beg did not fight shy while being guided by the former's whims. Nor did the latter hesitate to describe the Sheikh as "the master of the masses" in spite of his (the Sheikh's) unpredictable nature.

But following his removal from the cabinet and subsequent expulsion from the basic membership of the ruling party, Afzal Beg found the Sheikh ruthless and devoid of compassion or pity. Removal of Beg from the cabinet followed the receipt of a report by Abdullah from Mrs. Gandhi that he (Beg)

had been found hobnobbing with some influential men in Delhi in an attempt to oust him from power. Mrs. Gandhi was reported to have informed Abdullah about Beg's "involvement" in secret talks with some bureaucrats and politicians in Delhi. Beg's separate meetings with Prime Minister Desai and Defence Minister, Jagjivan Ram, in the Indian capital apparently set the stage for the Sheikh to strike his deputy. Following Beg's claim that he enjoyed support of at least 15 National Conference MLAs, the Sheikh evolved a new strategy to outwit him. He got into touch with Mrs. Gandhi to enlist her support. Mrs. Gandhi obliged the Sheikh by way of counselling the local Congress (I) leaders, especially Mufti Sayeed, to desist from lending their support to the camp led by Beg.

Earlier, in the last week of April 1978, as the Indian Minister for External Affairs, A.B. Vajpayee, was on an official visit to the USA to ensure, among other things, that Washington evinced greater interest in promoting support to and friendship with New Delhi, an American named Nelson Rockefeller arrived in Kashmir on a secret mission of much importance. His mission was to find out reaction from Sheikh Abdullah to the American move to seek an Indo-Pak settlement on Kashmir by dividing the State along the line of actual control, after minor adjustments. The Sheikh, tallest among the Kashmiri leaders, met Rockefeller in Srinagar for about 90 minutes. The meeting between the two took place in the Sheikh's house, with no aids on either side. At the end of Nelson Rockefeller's three-day trip to Kashmir on 2 May, I put out a news item on how the American dignitary had sought to sell Washington's idea favouring division of Jammu and Kashmir with some modifications on present line of actual control. Some bureaucrats and leaders of the National Conference party had urged the Sheikh to deny my report. But the Kashmir leader chose to maintain silence on the issue. The Sheikh referred to Rockefeller's visit to Kashmir and explained that, as desired by the Indian External Affairs Ministry, the American politician had been treated with due courtesy. The Kashmir leader said that though he had informal discussions with Rockefeller on the world situation, he had no confidential or private talks with him. The Sheikh

meaningfully kept himself aloof on the occasion from making a mention of, or reference to, the reported American plan seeking a division of the Kashmir State along the line of actual control.

The Sheikh, however, faced uneasy problems only after the Congress party, under the leadership of Mrs. Gandhi, returned to power at the Centre with its landslide victory at the hustings in January 1980. The talk of the possible overthrow of the Sheikh regime started initially with the formation of a government in Delhi with Indira Gandhi as the Prime Minister. The Congress (I) party organised rallies and lectures in the Kashmir Valley, berating the Abdullah government for its utter failure to check prices and root out mounting corruption in the State administration. The party did not stop at that. Some of its prominent leaders let it be known that they did not cherish the continued existence of regional political groups like the National Conference which, in their opinion, were a stumbling block in the way of balanced economic development and stability in the country.

A sizeable section of the Congress (I) party in Jammu and Kashmir seemed keen to get back power which the party, in the "larger interests" of India, transferred to Abdullah in 1975. Members of this section were never happy over the transfer of power to Abdullah. The issue, then, had provoked serious differences among the members of the party high command with the former Chief Minister of Kashmir, Mir Qasim, who stepped down to facilitate Abdullah's return to power, and Mufti Sayeed the party President, pulling in different directions. Again, the Sheikh left no stone unturned to show that his party (National Conference) alone enjoyed "popularity" in the Kashmir Valley and that he could not be regarded as a "puppet". But after the overthrow of the non-Congress (I) governments in the rest of India, the Kashmir leader took little time to change his roar into a friendly purr.

Though Mrs. Gandhi had, during her meetings with senior Kashmir Congress(I) leaders in March and April 1980, turned down proposals to dismiss the Sheikh's government, the "Lion of Kashmir" felt insecure. This, apparently, was the product of Mrs. Gandhi's ambivalent attitude towards Abdullah. She

brought him back to power in 1975 in order to defuse the Kashmir question which continues to rankle Pakistan. She made him Chief Minister much against the wishes of the majority of her partymen in Kashmir and elsewhere in India. During the Janata rule, however, the Sheikh was seen to veer towards the adversaries of Mrs. Gandhi, and though he did not join their bandwagon, relations between him and Indira Gandhi were never the same again. New Delhi took a strong exception to the utterances by Abdullah in Srinagar on 13 July 1980. Mrs. Gandhi and Indian Home Minister, Zail Singh, did not appreciate his remark equating India and Pakistan and reiterating the Kashmiris' determination to resist attempts by the two countries to "enslave" them. Abdullah's remark was recorded as he addressed a public meeting at the martyrs' graveyard in the vicinity of Khanyar in the interior of the Srinagar city.

Sheikh Abdullah's adversaries in Kashmir and elsewhere in India heaved a sigh of relief only after he was declared dead by a team of doctors on September 8, 1982. But, nonetheless, Kashmir was struck with grief and gloom as the news about the Sheikh's death was made public during the early hours of 9 September. The local authorities kept the news a wellguarded secret for at least ten hours, apparently to prevent "anti-social" elements from posing problems to the law and order machinery under the cover of darkness. The Kashmir leader was laid to rest on 10 September outside the historic Hazratbal shrine on the outskirts of Srinagar with full state honours. Prime Minister, Mrs. Gandhi, scores of Central leaders, members of Indian Parliament, prominent representatives from some States and some foreign envoys, based in Delhi, were among others who joined the funeral procession. Jammu and Kashmir observed an 11-day mourning as a mark of respect to the memory of the departed leader. The Sheikh's death was regarded by many in Kashmir as the greatest public tragedy of their times.

Compromise and Confrontation

An emotion when once aroused tends to persist and leaves behind an emotional mood which can, in the initial stage, lead to the subdued expression of discontent. An example, in this connection, was too obvious to be missed on 8 September 1982 when Dr. Farooq Abdullah was installed as Kashmir's Chief Minister much against the wishes of his ambitious brother-in-law, G.M. Shah. Choice of operations, employed by New Delhi, was so swift that Shah was left with no alternative but to tolerate the late Sheikh's successor. Unpredictable political lord of Kashmir, Sheikh Abdullah, had, before his death, disabled his son-in-law, Shah, for action. After Dr. Farooq's "coronation" as President of the National Conference party in place of his father in August 1981, Shah ran fast and furious until he found himself virtually placed on the debris of doubts. The Sheikh refused to be sympathetic to his son-in-law when the latter resigned from the council of ministers weeks before the former breathed his last.

Sheikh Abdullah had strong reasons to oppose attempts at encouraging G.M. Shah. Shah's inclusion in the Sheikh's cabinet was the product of the pressure quietly built by the former's wife, Begum Khalida, necessitating her father, "Lion of Kashmir", to provide the ministerial chair to his controversial son-in-law. The Sheikh, who was said to have been very fond of his daughter, Khalida, proved incapable of dealing with Shah even when the latter had embarrassed him, on more than one occasion, in Srinagar and elsewhere in Kashmir. A serious problem cropped up for the Sheikh in June 1981 with the emer-

gence of serious differences between his son-in-law, who was then Works and Power Minister, and Devi Das Thakur, Finance Minister. Shah and Thakur crossed swords with each other on one occasion in the presence of scores of people and politicians.

The incident took place at the district development board meeting at Wakura, on the outskirts of Srinagar, where the two Ministers created an awkward situation for their Chief Minister, Sheikh Abdullah. It all happened when Shah reacted sharply to the method adopted by Thakur to highlight the requirements of different segments of the society in the Jammu region. The Sheikh who was compelled to intervene, made no secret of his support to Thakur, although the former made use of such expressions as to keep his son-in-law in a good humour. Shah who was not even number two in the Sheikh's cabinet, had an advantageous position by virtue of being the Kashmir leader's son-in-law. After Sheikh Abdullah, Shah alone was provided with a pilot jeep by the State-run motor vehicles department. The Sheikh had been impressed by the tact and talent of Thakur. But the former had, for obvious reasons, managed to tolerate Shah despite a phenomenal increase in the number of the latter's adversaries in and outside the State administration.

The Sheikh and his eldest son, Dr. Farooq, felt relieved after Shah resigned from the State ministry. In spite of the existence of the pro-Shah lobby inside the National Conference party, the Sheikh had an easy time when he inducted Dr. Farooq in the council of ministers. There was much confusion on the political scene when the Sheikh fell sick. The number two in his cabinet, Devi Das Thakur, was too scared that he went in hiding. The Sheikh's son-in-law, who was regarded as a challenger to Dr. Farooq for the Chief Ministership, maintained a low profile lest he was misunderstood. G.M. Shah found it difficult for several months to assert himself after Dr. Farooq's installation as the Chief Minister. Prime Minister, Mrs. Gandhi, directed her partymen in Kashmir to give up their campaign against the National Conference party after Dr. Farooq addressed her as "dear mother" and assured her of his fullest cooperation.

However, in July 1983, a new development took place after

the emergence of serious differences between Dr. Farooq's National Conference and Mrs. Gandhi-backed Congress party in Kashmir. Behind-the-scene steps were taken to heal the rift between Mrs. Gandhi and Chief Minister, Farooq Abdullah. And in spite of the fact that Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, President of the State Pradesh Congress Committee, and his associates wanted to kick their heels on Farooq's chessboard, Vijay Dhar, political assistant to the Indian Prime Minister's son, Rajiv Gandhi, was encouraged by a handful of Central leaders to maintain close contact with the Kashmir Chief Minister until an amicable settlement between the two major political parties—National Conference and Congress (I)—was brought about. Vijay Dhar was quite active, shuttling between Srinagar and Delhi more often than not since the beginning of July. His secret meetings with Farooq had led some observers in Kashmir to believe that Mrs. Gandhi and her son, Rajiv, did not like the areas of disagreement between Farooq and New Delhi to get widened in the context of political happenings in the neighbouring Punjab.

Dr. Abdullah's meeting with Mrs. Gandhi in Delhi in July was, significantly, followed by animated whispers by some leading Congressmen in Kashmir about the apparent decision of the Prime Minister to bury the hatchet. But on finding that some political circles had interpreted the meeting as an indication of Mrs. Gandhi's undisclosed plan to encourage cooperation between the two sides, the Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) leaders sought to convey to their supporters that the Prime Minister had not pardoned Dr. Abdullah for his "controversial" role in the elections to the State Legislative Assembly. That a plot was afoot to push Farooq Abdullah to the wall was borne out by the manner in which the Congress (I) faction led by Mufti Sayeed had intensified its campaign against the National Conference government. And despite the victory achieved by the National Conference at the hustings on 5 June, the Mufti and his supporters were anxious to knock the Chief Minister into a cocked hat and capture power. Indeed, the ruling party circles themselves made no secret of their perturbation over what they termed as "subtle" attempts by the Congress (I) to topple Farooq's government.

A bomb explosion in the Srinagar stadium on 15 August, India's independence day, proved quite helpful for the Congress (I) to exploit the Farooq government. A good deal of confusion prevailed as women and children cried and left the stadium despite the fact that the majority of the spectators stood firm to watch the colourful programme that had involved contingents of Army, paramilitary forces, local police and school children. Explosion of the bomb took place shortly after Chief Minister Farooq concluded his speech. Scores of Indian Army personnel had wanted to retaliate after three soldiers were injured in the explosion. But the quick intervention by two senior Army officials prevented them from doing so. It took no time for the policemen to reach the spot where some agitated Army personnel wanted to maul a few Muslim civilians. After separating the agitated soldiers from the rest of the crowd, the policemen pounced on three youths and hurriedly whisked them away for interrogation. In all, six persons, said to be the activists of the extremist People's League and Jamait-i-Tulba, were rounded up in connection with the bomb explosion.

A day earlier, on 14 August, about 20 activists of the two anti-India groups were nabbed in different parts of Kashmir for having fired crackers as part of their plan to celebrate Pakistan's independence day. The incident was followed by Dr. Farooq's directive to the Kashmir police force to be vigilant. But as the mischief-mongers did not find it difficult to catch trouble-shooters napping, a small group of people tore into pieces the Indian tri-colour flag at a place on the outskirts of the Anantnag town in south Kashmir on 15 August. Farooq had a clean image and public acceptance before and after he formed his government. But he exposed himself as a novice, caring little for New Delhi's role in Kashmir and for Mrs. Gandhi's superiority.

Again, in August 1983, the ruling Congress (I) party at the Centre made its apathy to Farooq Abdullah amply clear. From Kerala to Kashmir, and that too under the orders of government of India. That was the journey of V. Khalid after a short spell of briefing in Delhi by unidentified specialists. He could not avoid it as he was known to be law-knowing, law-abiding citizen. Khalid, a judge of the Kerala high court, took over

as the chief justice of the Jammu and Kashmir high court in place of Mufti Mahuddin Farooqi. Khalid assumed office in Srinagar soon after he was sworn in as the new chief justice by Governor, B.K. Nehru, at a colourful ceremony in the Raj Bhavan on 24 August, barely a day after his arrival in Kashmir. Khalid appeared on the Kashmir scene at a time when public attention was drawn by the disagreement between New Delhi and Farooq Abdullah on the question of shifting Farooqi from Srinagar to Sikkim.

Significantly, Khalid's arrival in Srinagar was followed by the circulation of a statement by the opposition People's Conference demanding the resignation of Farooq Abdullah's government for its "failure" to prevent the transfer of Mufti Bahuddin Farooqi. Bashir Ahmed Khan, a practising lawyer and secretary of the People's Conference, accused the State government of having played fraud with the people of Kashmir by surrendering its constitutional rights relating to the appointment and transfer of chief justice of Jammu and Kashmir high court. Khan said: "It was regrettable that the State government should, on the one hand, proclaim to be the sole protector of the State's internal autonomy and, on the other, make total surrender to the dictates of the Centre by compromising on the vital issue concerning the State's special status." Khalid was sent in by New Delhi in spite of the Kashmir Law Minister P.L. Handoo's explanation that the provisions of the Constitution of India governing transfer of high court judges, including chief justice, did not apply to Jammu and Kashmir.

Handoo had argued, on more than one occasion, that while the high court was a creation of the Jammu and Kashmir Constitution unlike other State high courts, only his State could decide on matters like transfer or appointment of high court judges including chief justice. Curiously, however, Farooq Abdullah kept himself aloof from the controversy over the transfer of Farooqi two days before Khalid arrived in Srinagar. Farooq manipulated to silence the opposition Congress (I) leaders in Kashmir, though for a short period, after he attended the swearing-in ceremony at the Raj Bhavan and felicitated V. Khalid. And without the knowledge of the rest of his cabinet ministers, Farooq had a quiet meeting with Khalid

in an apparent bid to convince the latter that the Law Minister Handoo had misled him (Farooq) on the question of shifting Mufti Bahuddin Farooqi from Srinagar to Sikkim.

Farooq's brother-in-law, Shah, exposed himself, in the beginning of September, as an ambitious politician, trying to cultivate Mrs. Gandhi and other Congress (I) leaders in a bid to upset the apple-cart of the ruling party. With his eyes focussed on the seat occupied by ebullient Farooq, Shah looked eager to bring about a change in order to establish his superiority over the faction led by his estranged brother-in-law. Conscious of the fact that New Delhi would, undoubtedly, be a decisive factor, Shah began to eulogise Mrs. Gandhi. He also reached an understanding with his enemy's enemy. While Shah considered Farooq Abdullah as his enemy, Devi Das Thakur was regarded as Farooq's enemy. Hence, Thakur proved himself as Shah's enemy's enemy. Thakur, who was, to all intents and purposes, a close associate of Sheikh Abdullah until the latter passed away in September 1982, played a leading role while installing Farooq Abdullah as the Chief Minister much against the wishes of Shah. Thakur fell out with Farooq after the latter refused to accommodate him in his council of ministers constituted soon after the Sheikh's death.

There was no love lost between Shah and Thakur when both of them operated as cabinet-rank ministers in the Sheikh's regime. And after Dr. Farooq had put on the mantle of Chief Ministerships, Shah's anger against Thakur deepened in view of the latter's involvement in the activity designed, as it was, to help Dr. Farooq. After shifting himself to the Indian capital as a practising lawyer in the supreme court, Thakur managed to develop friendly relations with several Congress (I) leaders, some of them highly critical of Dr. Farooq's performance. Motivated by the desire to take the wind out of Farooq's sails, Thakur laboured to woo Shah on the strength of reports about Mrs. Gandhi's equation with him (Thakur). It was an interesting development when Shah and Thakur joined hands before Farooq was compelled to expel Thakur from the ruling National Conference party and dissolve the working committee as part of his plan to reduce the influence of the Shah group.

Farooq Abdullah's action was regarded by Shah as "unconstitutional and undemocratic". While Shah and Thakur engaged themselves in efforts designed, as they were, to create agonizing problems for their opponents within the National Conference, Prime Minister's son, Rajiv Gandhi, directed his assistant, Vijay Dhar, to disassociate himself from the activity seeking a compromise between the ruling National Conference, headed by Farooq, and Mrs. Gandhi's Congress Party. Dhar was also ordered, in September 1983, to avoid acting as "unauthorised" mediator. Rajiv's directive to Vijay Dhar had followed the division of opinion between the latter and the former's Man Friday, Arun Nehru, and an increase in the resentment by some Congress (I) leaders in Srinagar and Delhi against Dr. Farooq and his government. With the support received from several Congressmen including three Central ministers—Arif Mohammed Khan, Ghulam Nabi Azad and Mrs. Mohsina Kidwai—Arun Nehru manipulated unceremonious ouster of Vijay Dhar from the Rajiv camp in Delhi. Easy, indeed, proved the operations launched in Srinagar and Delhi by those pitted against Dr. Farooq soon after the latter organised a conference of the opposition parties in Kashmir's summer capital in the beginning of October.

The 3-day conclave of various opposition parties ended, without offering any concrete suggestions for healing the rift between the five-party united front and the Bhartiya Janata Party-Lok Dal National Democratic Alliance. Inability of the participants to organise a detailed discussion on the question of bringing about a rapprochement between the two sides was the product of two important developments: lack of interest shown by the Janata Party President, Chandra Shekhar, and Democratic Socialist Party chairman, H.N. Bahuguna, in attempts at attaching undue importance to Charan Singh and A.B. Vajpayee and, secondly, the refusal by the National Democratic Alliance to attend the conclave. Inaugural function of the conclave, originally slated for the morning of 5 October, was put off till the afternoon that day after the host of the conference, Dr. Farooq, was advised by the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, N.T. Rama Rao, and the West Bengal Chief Minister, Jyoti Basu, to rush letters to Charan Singh and Vajpayee

inviting them to attend the opposition meet.

A peculiar situation developed on the second day of the conference after the two-member Akali Dal delegation insisted on the inclusion, in the draft resolution, unexpected recommendations favouring abolition of the office of Governor in all States and deletion of Article 356 of the Constitution of India conferring on the Centre wide powers to impose President's rule. Two Communist leaders, Jyoti Basu and E.M.S. Namboodiripad, averted the threat of a division after they explained to Prakash Singh Badal and his colleague S.S. Barnala the need for a "cautious approach without trying to spark off controversies". Later, the Akali Dal leaders chose to focus their attention on issues, such as Centre-State relations and grant of more powers to the States. Discussions on the character of the Centre in a truly federal set-up indicated the emergence of two distinct trends of thought among the participants. Chitta Basu confronted N.T. Rama Rao when the latter described the Centre as a "conceptual myth". Basu who seemed to voice the views of the leftist parties remarked: "Andhra Chief Minister had displayed a dangerous trend of thought by characterising the Centre as a myth". N.T.R. observed: "That the Centre could become such a powerful and all-pervading force as to cause the very concept of statehood to dwindle into insignificance is really a historical paradox." His trend of opinion found extreme expression in the speech of Prakash Singh Badal who offered the Anandpur Sahib resolution as a model for Centre-State relations. The Anandpur resolution envisaged that four subjects—defence, foreign affairs, general communications and currency—should remain with the Central government, while the other departments should be under the exclusive control of the States.

The Congress (I)-backed G.M. Shah was found, by November, at war with Dr. Farooq. Strained relations between the two sparked off a bitter controversy within the ruling family with the late Sheikh's widow, Begun Akbar Jehan, increasingly anxious for the continuance of her son, Farooq, as the State Chief Minister. Kashmir was agog with rumours of sorts suggesting that the situation was pregnant with the possibility of

a major political explosion like the one which, in 1953, rocked the State with the dramatic dismissal and imprisonment of the then Premier, Sheikh Abdullah. Battle lines were drawn and two opposition factions within the National Conference party flexed their muscles to measure strength with each other. Happily for Shah and Devi Das Thakur, Mrs. Gandhi's Congress party intensified its anti-Farooq Abdullah campaign, timing it with the growing conflict between two brothers-in-law in the National Conference. And although Shah kept his cards to his chest, he did expose himself as the main contender to the Chief Minister's office.

Shah avoided to disclose identity and number of the legislators he had managed to win over. On the other, Dr. Farooq claimed to have come across evidence pointing to the involvement of Shah and his men in attempts at purchasing National Conference legislators for Rs. 5 lakhs per head. Much vexed by the oft-repeated charge that he had encouraged anti-India and communal elements, Farooq started, towards the end of 1983, a search for the technique that was required to establish his bona fides. And after his government was reprimanded by the Indian Home Ministry for its "failure" to take a stern action against undesirable elements in his homeland, Farooq asserted, on more than one occasion, that his government endeavoured to strengthen the Indo-Kashmir link and, as such, could not be accused of being lenient towards anti-India activists in Kashmir. Farooq's refusal to break all bonds with leaders of the opposition parties pitted against Mrs. Gandhi prompted his adversaries to increase the effect of the campaign against his government in the beginning of 1984. His refusal became real than apparent when, before his departure for Calcutta to attend the opposition conclave, he conveyed to the State Governor, B.K. Nehru, the nature of his interest in the national politics.

B.K. Nehru, who was accused by a section of the local Congressmen of having been unnecessarily soft towards the National Conference and its government, wanted Farooq Abdullah and his colleagues to keep themselves away from the Calcutta conclave in an apparent bid to convey to the embittered Prime Minister, through a third party, that the Kashmir Chief Minister had no intention to tie himself to the apron-

strings of vocal opposition leaders in India. Farooq was keen to participate in the conclave at Calcutta where, according to him, the plenary session of All-India Congress Committee (AICC) had, earlier, given rise to unwarranted allegations against him and his government. In March, Mrs. Gandhi's Congress party manipulated a change culminating in the transfer of Nehru and appointment of Delhi's Lt-Governor, Jagmohan, in his place. Mrs. Gandhi-backed opponents of Farooq took more than eight months to dislodge his "protege", Nehru, from Kashmir. And attempts designed, as they were, to get rid of him were facilitated by his assertion: "As Governor I cannot afford to ignore the Constitution and to be dictated by a set of agitating Congressmen."

B.K. Nehru's transfer was not bolt from the blue as people in Kashmir and elsewhere had been gradually prepared by the Congress (I) leaders over the months for the change. Nor did the installation of Jagmohan as his successor spring a mine on the average Kashmiri. Reason: Kashmiris, by and large, expected the change as it was allowed to take place after the Congress (I) leaders in the State poured out vials of their wrath against his (Nehru's) sympathetic attitude towards Farooq and his government. Jagmohan's name was first proposed by Arif Mohammed Khan, Union minister of state, and Arun Nehru towards the end of June 1983. Their anger against B.K. Nehru was the product of the latter's refusal to oblige local Congress (I) leaders by way of berating Farooq Abdullah. Nor did he align himself with Congressmen in their tirade against the National Conference government after the 5 June elections to the Legislative Assembly.

After the 7-day tour undertaken by the three-member Congress(I) parliamentary team in different places in Kashmir in mid-June, 1983, Arif Khan and Arun Nehru quietly spoke of their preference for Jagmohan as B.K. Nehru's successor while talking to their "informers" in Srinagar. Incidentally, one of the "informers", in a fit of ecstasy after his unusual drinking-bout in a posh hotel in Srinagar, proclaimed: "Get ready, Jagmohan is shortly replacing pro-Farooq Governor Nehru." Notwithstanding the spate of allegations against the local administration, especially police personnel, B.K. Nehru talked

about "orderly conduct of the poll" and, much against the wishes of the Congress (I) leaders in Srinagar and Delhi, went a step further as he told the joint session of the State legislature during its autumn session in 1983 that it was a "matter of great satisfaction that elections have been completed in a fair and free manner". And that he was against attempts, overt or covert, to create difficulties for Farooq's government became evident as he said that the Kashmir State "cannot solve problems without generous support and assistance" from Delhi.

The war of succession in Kashmir had, by May 1984, intensified, bringing into focus certain factors with portentous gravity. And as Mrs. Gandhi had endorsed the line of action adopted by Farooq Abdullah's adversaries, the ruling National Conference party was found engaged in the battle for its survival. In the process, either side supported the quoted saying: "All is fair in love and war." The bitter power struggle had ripped apart much-talked-of family which, until the death of Sheikh Abdullah dominated the political scene in Kashmir for nearly five decades—and that too following the commencement of the campaign against the autocratic rule in the State in 1931. Indeed, the controversial family stood almost evenly divided with the late Sheikh's eldest daughter, Khalida, leading the tough battle to dethrone her brother, Farooq. With Mrs. Gandhi's refusal to allow Farooq and his government to continue in power for long, a peculiar element was introduced in the situation, prompting the late Sheikh's widow, Begum Akbar Jehan, and her son, Farooq, to seek Allah's favour.

The ambitious mother and her ambitious son did not fight shy while arguing that their apple-cart could not be upset as long as Allah remained "kind" to them. The battle for coveted office of Chief Minister started shortly after Khalida's husband, Shah, rose in revolt with Farooq's appointment as President of the National Conference. Initially confined to verbal duels, the power struggle took a violent turn in May when Farooq's supporters took to streets, demonstrating against the ruling party legislator, Sheikh Jabbar, for his disassociation from the Farooq camp. Reports went round suggesting "secret" alliance of at least 15 National Conference MLAs

with the Shah group. These reports culminated in a dramatic development, making the entire lot of the National Conference legislators to swear their loyalty to Farooq's leadership. On the other hand, however, Begum Khalida had vowed not to rest until she saw her brother out of power. And with her election as the President of the party in the wake of oneday convention organised in Srinagar by the dissident group, Khalida began to formulate scheme of things to deplete the strength of Farooq in the ruling party. In this, she heavily depended on the support and guidance of Devi Das Thakur.

There was nothing wrong in the kind of accusations hurled against each other by the ruling party and its detractors. That this exchange became louder and more intense with the arrival of Jagmohan as the Governor was also to be expected. In fact, the first to present their assessment of the situation to the new Governor were the National Conference dissidents in Jammu as well as Srinagar. And G.M. Shah drove to Raj Bhavan with his list of grievances within hours of the landing of Jagmohan at the Srinagar airport. And after the conclusion of the convention convened by the dissidents in Srinagar on 23 May, Thakur received a loud approbation by his supporters for the kind of report he had submitted to Jagmohan on the "dangerous" policies of the Farooq government.

The beginning of June was inauspicious for Farooq and his government. The storm in Kashmir was turbulent. And it was worth watching more for the characters it involved than for the set of causes culminating in the unexpected commotion. Indeed, the storm turned the stomach of even scores of religion-ridden Muslims who, to all intents and purposes, were not prepared to witness violence, destruction and deaths in the month of Ramadan which had commenced five days before swords were crossed in parts of the State. Of all the local Muslims, Farooq Abdullah had, more often than not, spoken about the ominous happenings in the neighbouring Punjab. And, yet, he failed to hit the right nail on the head when Governor, Jagmohan, refused to applaud to the echo the arrangements made by his government to curb trouble-makers. Farooq was pulled up by the Governor for the manner in which the local administration had allowed itself to be in the arms of Morpheus.

Jagmohan protested against inadequate security measures which, according to him, resulted in the free-play by arsonists and communal elements not only in Srinagar but also in Baramulla and Mattan in Kashmir and in the vicinity of Jammu, Poonch, Naushera, Rajouri, Ranbir Singh Pura and Kathua on 7 June. Farooq got more frightened than hurt when Jagmohan, provoked by a series of acts of violence and arson in parts of Srinagar, made a reference to his plan to direct the Army and paramilitary Border Security Force and Central Reserve Police Force to maintain law and order in Kashmir. Farooq was left with no alternative but to order the local police to use bullets against trouble-makers and miscreants. His orders were implemented, although much damage had been done by the time the police and BSF and CRPF personnel went into action. Farooq and his government were found ineffective even when a day earlier, on 6 June, groups of Sikhs, supported by a number of local Muslims, gave a hint of their hit-and-run tactics as they staged anti-India demonstrations in parts of Kashmir.

Apparently agitated by the Intelligence Bureau's report accusing the local administration in Kashmir of having failed to adopt effective measures before the storm lashed parts of the State, the Indian Home Minister, P.C. Sethi, called a spade a spade when, in his crash message to Farooq Abdullah, he decried the Kashmir government's failure to deal with the situation. Even Mrs. Gandhi did not hesitate to give a bit of her mind as she came across the anxious Chief Minister of Kashmir shortly after her arrival in Leh (Ladakh) on 11 June. Farooq was baffled when Mrs. Gandhi made a cryptic remark: "I have come here to meet the people and not the flamboyant politicians." The die was cast to send Farooq packing.

5

Bloodless Coup

The difference of opinion was only on the route to be taken. What road should the dozen legislators, who spent a sleepless night at the residence of Dilawar Mir in Tulsibagh area of Srinagar, take to the Raj Bhavan—the picturesque road that rings the Dal Lake or the more adventurous route through Gupkar Road, where Dr. Farooq Abdullah stayed? For Maulvi Iftikhar Hussain Ansari, the firebrand secessionist of 1957, Janata leader of 1977, and an Indira follower in 1984, the choice was clear: It should be an act of psychological defiance. The caravan had to pass through the Gupkar Road.

At 5.30 a.m. on Monday, 2 July, the "dirty dozen" as their opponents described them and the Congress(I) leaders passed the residence of Farooq Abdullah. They knew Governor, Jagmohan, would be up and waiting for them. After all, he was contacted the previous night and it was he who had suggested this hour—early enough to make it look decent and not late enough for the Chief Minister to wake up. The dissidents, literally, sped past the house when the lion cub, Farooq, was sleeping. And Farooq would never forgive himself for that undisturbed sleep. It disturbed his political career for years to come.

It was, in a sense, a "Yom-Kippur" coup. The enemy struck at the most unsuspecting hour. The previous day was Id-ul-Fitr, the end of the month of Ramadan and the day of festival. The whole Valley of Kashmir celebrated it and Farooq was no exception. He had a charming girl friend from Bombay with whom he left the capital city of Srinagar on Id day. He had,

for once, lowered his guard. Farooq was of course aware of the dangers. Twice before the Governor (not Jagmohan) had kept awake expecting the dissidents from the National Conference. And Governor, B.K. Nehru, former Indian ambassador, T.N. Kaul, and former adviser to Mrs. Gandhi, P.N. Haksar, had all been pleading for him at New Delhi.

Farooq was also aware that it was a losing battle. Vijay Dhar, son of D.P. Dhar and at one time the prime adviser in Rajiv Gandhi's court, was his supporter. But Vijay was slowly ousted. Governor Nehru was replaced by Jagmohan, the controversial civil servant whose passion for razing old buildings reportedly matched demolishing state governments. Farooq had taken precautions. The State CID was alerted. The Raj Bhavan was watched: Whom does the Governor meet? Or, to be precise, who calls on the Governor? In fact, on the eve of the Id, Farooq had intensified the vigil. For, the Congress(I) leaders in Kashmir, after visits to New Delhi, had talked of "pleasant changes" in the offing. But Id was different. This was the day for celebration—not vigil. His political supporters did enjoy the well-earned rest. So did his administration. Not New Delhi, however. Three different intelligence agencies were working overtime. The Intelligence Bureau (IB), the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) and, of course, the BSF(G)—the intelligence branch of the Border Security Force. They too were watching the members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs). What precise role each of them played was not revealed. But those three all-seeing eyes were wide open on Id day.

Governor, Jagmohan, was tense. He could not have been unaware of his role when he was catapulted from Panaji to Srinagar. If he were, all doubts were removed during the last week of June when he held detailed discussions at New Delhi. And on Id day, the 12 dissidents contacted him. At 5.30 he was up, waiting for the 12 to turn up. Cups of steaming tea were awaiting them in the Raj Bhavan, overlooking the Dal Lake. On the eve of Id, the Gujarat Governor, B.K. Nehru, received summons from New Delhi. Nehru was to be consulted on the plan of action. When he was the Governor of Kashmir he had all along pleaded for moderation. His advice was accepted, as long as he was in Kashmir. He was needed in

New Delhi, once again. Of course there was a crisis in Gujarat too. Four ministers had threatened to quit. But that could wait.

Farooq Abdullah's estranged brother-in-law, G.M. Shah, as well as two top leaders of the Congress(I), Mufti Mohammed Sayeed and Maulvi Iftikhar, were found unusually secretive even when they were provoked by some newsmen based in Srinagar between 25 June and 27 June. The decision by the trio to be non-communicative resulted only in the animated whispers even in the Farooq camp. At least two journalists in Srinagar, Mohammed Sayeed Mallik and Zaffar Meraj, knew all about it. The former, like his friend Mufti Sayeed, maintained silence. But Zaffar Meraj, who was then quite close to Shah, let out the secret in a coffee house in Srinagar in an unguarded moment. Zaffar was found engrossed and, on 28 June, he said in the Srinagar wing of State-run Information Department that from Monday next (2 July) he would not be able to devote himself to the local Urdu daily he worked for. He appeared too confident. His colleagues thought there was something stronger than coffee behind his bravado. They had missed a scoop.

G.M. Shah obviously knew much more. For 30 years he was considered to be successor to Sheikh Abdullah. Always wearing a cap and dark glasses, Shah had been waiting for his opportunity all along. He was outwitted in 1982 when he lost the battle to Farooq. And he did not forgive the young man for his impertinence. There was, however, a more formidable enemy—the mother-in-law, Begum Akbar Jehan. It was not too uncommon for a man to be on the wrong side of his mother-in-law. There was another reason also for his prickly relations with Begum Akbar Jehan: They are neighbours. A six-foot wall separates the two compounds, one owned by G.M. Shah and the other by his mother-in-law. The cool Swiss blood in Begum Akbar Jehan—her father, Nedou, pioneer hotelier of Srinagar was of Swiss origin who embraced Islam—helped her weather many a storm. Khalida, her first-born, and G.M. Shah, Khalida's husband, were also with her in the political battles she had fought. Shah, then a government servant, resigned when the Sheikh was ousted by New Delhi in 1953.

Shah was the heir-apparent till 1982. Dr. Farooq was practising medicine at Yarmouth in England. For 12 long years he was busy with his medicine. And Shah was happy at home. Then the situation changed. Farooq, who until then was interested only in ghazals, golf and girls, suddenly got interested in politics too. And by 1982 when the "Lion of Kashmir" was ailing, Shah was shown his place. Shah and Khalida could not brook this. After all, the National Conference had been hearing the slogan: "Gul Shah badshah" (Gul Shah is the king). Shah had spent eight and half years in jail and three and half years in exile for the party. He could not be brushed aside by a young medico whom his wife described as "disco Chief Minister". Shah held his mother-in-law responsible for all this. Left to himself, Sheikh Abdullah may not have ousted G.M. Shah, he and his wife believed. The Begum was different. No wonder, on the day Farooq was sworn in powerful crackers burst all around the premises. And the neighbouring house was totally silent. Gul Shah had been biding his time. In 1982, not only the Sheikh family but even the family that mattered in New Delhi was opposed to him.

But things changed. Especially after the elections in Kashmir in June 1983. Shah was acceptable to New Delhi. He had but one mission—if only he could manage 12 MLAs from the National Conference he was assured of the chair. And he knew how to do it. He offered every one of the 12 a chair each. His cabinet that evening had a unique distinction: A 100 per cent representation and total equality. Governor, Jagmohan, did not recognise all the 12. He could not be faulted. After all, he had been in Srinagar only for just eight weeks. And most of those legislators were careful not to meet him too frequently. They knew Farooq's police had been watching. Jagmohan did not take any chances. He wanted each MLA to sign a document, pledging loyalty to Shah, in his presence. Once this was over he had three things to do: Contact New Delhi, summon the police chief and dismiss the Chief Minister, Farooq. He did everything by sunset that day—and as a bonus swore in a new cabinet too. At 7 a.m. the Governor had summoned the police chief, Peer Ghulam Hassan Shah, to Raj Bhavan. He was given court orders: Deploy the force in strength in and around

Srinagar. A little later Farooq made his appearance in the Raj Bhavan. Jagmohan was very brief. He gave photostat copies of the letters from the 12. Farooq wanted to see them. The Governor had no objection. The 12 had not left Raj Bhavan. In fact, they did not, until they were sworn in. It was a sit-in that succeeded.

Farooq played his final card when he confronted the 12. With him they made 13, the number at the last supper. He shook hands with each. He did not appear to be too surprised over some of them going to the other side. But surely he did not expect that even the two MLAs, Mrs. Khem Lata Wakhloo and Mrs. Gurbachan Kumari Rana, nominated by him would coolly cross over like this. But he had no time to argue. The Governor was in a hurry. Now that Farooq had lost his majority, would he please send in his resignation? Farooq would not. Instead, he called his war council and made three suggestions: (1) let the Assembly be summoned on an early date and the strength be tested, (2) let the Assembly be kept under animated suspension, and (3) let there be a poll. In New Delhi there appeared to be a clear generation gap in the Kashmir lobby. B.K. Nehru, T.N. Kaul and P.N. Haksar, the old ICS club members, were not happy at these developments. But not so the new leaders who were in charge, Arun Nehru and Makhani Lal Fotedar. And, of course, Rajiv Gandhi had made his displeasure with Farooq quite obvious.

Farooq had campaigned for the Congress(I) in 1980. He claimed that he had a hand in tilting the Muslim vote for the Congress(I) then. And in those troubled days of 1982 when Sheikh Abdullah died, Mrs. Gandhi supported Farooq. The emotional young man even called her "mother". But the "son" soon turned defiant. After the debacle of the Congress(I) in Andhra and Karnataka, Farooq found new courage. N.T. Rama Rao of Andhra Pradesh and Farooq developed a liking for each other. The saffron robes of the former and the Muslim origin of the latter together, it was felt, would give rise to a new Gemini leadership. The two even worked in concert. They addressed meetings in Saurashtra, hosted opposition meets at Vijayawada and Srinagar, planned an opposition front. Most dangerous: Farooq was enjoying himself as the new leader of

Muslims, who had gone out of the Congress fold and had no leader of their own.

For some time New Delhi toyed with the idea of dismissing Farooq on the ground of his harbouring the extremist Sikhs or not controlling the anti-Indian lobby in Kashmir. Indian Home Minister, P.C. Sethi, wrote letters to Farooq, in the quotable words of one of his supporters, "everyday except on Sunday because there is no postal delivery on that day". Even a minor incident like a stone-throwing in Srinagar was enough provocation for Sethi's pen. But dismissal was considered to be risky. After all, Farooq was the only Muslim Chief Minister left in India. A dismissal would have to be necessarily followed by President's rule. That would mean total alienation of 12 per cent votes even in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Hence the decision: Farooq had to go, but he would go only when another Muslim Chief Minister could be installed in Srinagar. The obvious choice was G.M. Shah. The Congress(I) leaders in Kashmir also were told of the strategy: They had to organise 12 defections.

But there was a hitch. Jammu and Kashmir was the only State with a law against defection. But every law has a loophole. A split is no defection. Naturally, the National Conference split. The floor-crossing got legitimacy. On 2 July, Jagmohan, in a sense, surprised New Delhi. The Governor had done his job: He did not allow Farooq time to test his strength in the Assembly. He did get Farooq out. But he recommended Governor's rule for the State. At 1 p.m. Mufti Sayeed was getting restive. He got in touch with New Delhi directly. His message was crisp: If Shah is let down now, Kashmir would be out of the hands of the Congress(I) forever. The 12 MLAs would go back and even Shah may find it difficult to trust the Congress(I). New Delhi saw the point. The decision was taken at the highest level and the Raj Bhavan in Srinagar was told: Shah should be sworn in. There were two issues involved. First, the dependability of the Congress(I) support. Second, the absolute need for a Chief Minister from the Muslim community.

Mufti Sayeed had emphasised both these points exactly a week earlier at his meetings in New Delhi. For three days, from

22 June to 25 June, he had been in Delhi planning the coup.

Farooq was dismissed. He had another surprise when he received the dismissal order: He found that the new government was very efficient. The telephone at his residence went dead on the dot. The opposition parties in New Delhi were aghast at the dismissal. They protested. Farooq himself was too dazed on that day. He had gone to sleep as Chief Minister. He woke up to find the ground cut from under his feet. He had visitors from New Delhi—Comrade Rajeshwara Rao, I.K. Gujral, Tarakeshwari Sinha, Dr. Ashok Mitra, Chandrajit Yadav, Ambika Soni. And in their presence he showed the unquestionable hold he had over the masses. He made 12,000 Muslims who had come to see and hear him shout "Jai Hind". Internally, however, Farooq was very bitter against New Delhi. Government of India was confronted with a serious problem arising from the adverse reaction in Kashmir against the dismissal of Farooq's government. The drastic action had resulted in a patent resentment although, at the same time, Mrs. Gandhi's partymen and supporters were happy, if not popular, with the ouster of Farooq's regime.

The local authorities had, with the show of massive force, held in check feelings of hostility in Srinagar and elsewhere. A large number of people were arrested. Scores of opponents of G.M. Shah and Congress(I) went underground. And reports with the authorities suggested unwillingness by a significant number of Kashmiris to accept the change and acknowledge, without reservations, Shah's government as a better replacement. An indication, in this connection, was by no means uncertain when, on 7 July, several hundred activists, opposed to Shah and Mrs. Gandhi's Congress party in Kashmir, suddenly came out and raised a dust in parts of Srinagar. The movement of these activists, many of them equipped with lathis and iron bars, was rapid after a report that eight to ten MLAs belonging to the Congress(I) had pledged their support to Farooq spread like wild fire. Equally rapid was the authorities' reaction. They reimposed curfew and issued shoot-at-sight orders if anybody attempted to violate prohibitory orders.

Firing in air by armed policemen on duty was, apparently, meant to frighten away pro-Farooq demonstrators. And

deployment of additional men from the BSF and CRPF was found necessary when, in some parts in the interior of the city of Srinagar, small groups of youths had threatened to set ablaze houses and shops owned by supporters of Mrs. Gandhi and of the "puppet regime" headed by Shah. Shah and his allies within the Congress(I) had insisted on the strict enforcement of orders banning movement by people. Reason : Shah as well as his supporters became nervous when an official intelligence agency reported presence of three Congress MLAs in the Mujahid Manzil, political headquarters of Farooq's National Conference party, on 7 July after the deposed Chief Minister and his mother temporarily shifted there. Although the Indian Home Ministry was informed about the alleged link between these three MLAs and Farooq, the State CID was provided with a different account altogether. Maulvi Iftikhar, leader of the Congress(I) legislature party, insisted on "complete unity" among his party-men in Jammu and Kashmir after the fall of Farooq Abdullah.

Even then the Maulvi and his colleagues, especially Mufti Sayeed, spent more than three hours in the MLA hostel located near G.M. Shah's residential premises. They had a reason to be inside the hostel. Of the 26 Congress(I) MLAs, at least twelve had stayed in the hostel. The Maulvi and the Mufti had quiet meetings with the party MLAs. The two left the hostel only after they were satisfied with the outcome of their meetings. Late night, around 11.30 p.m., the anxious Chief Minister was informed about the "unity of action and of purpose" within the Congress party. Five Congress(I) MLAs and two independent members of the Assembly—Bhim Singh of Panther's Party and Abdul Gani Lone of the People's Conference—seemed to be friendly with Farooq after his unceremonious ouster. Premature disclosure of the nature of their sympathy towards Farooq resulted in the hurried action by the local Congress leaders, who called upon their party legislators to adhere to the Prime Minister's directive for unity within the party. The action was right as a rivet as, in the light of the popularity of Farooq in Kashmir, the Congress leaders did not hesitate to play, though for a short while, the game of politics inside the MLA hostel. And in their game of wits they managed to outwit Farooq.

It was 31 July. It was expected as members of the two

hostile camps, one led by the deposed Chief Minister and the other loyal to Kashmir's new ruler, Shah, traded unprintable abuses on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. Within the first 20 minutes a new leaf was turned in the history of the State legislature when deafening noises, heated exchanges and physical violence marked the opening of one-day session of the Assembly in Srinagar. It was not unknown that Mrs. Gandhi's representative in Kashmir, Jagmohan, had summoned the session to enable Shah to prove his majority on the floor of the House. Supporters of Shah and those of Farooq were, unmistakably, found—indeed, before the commencement of the session—engaged in the spirited game designed, as it was, to pave way for the either side to outwit each other. The list of business was formulated by Wali Mohammed Itoo, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. The Assembly secretariat cyclostyled the list of business, making it clear that the motion of confidence in the council of ministers, headed by Shah, was to be taken first to be followed by two other motions—one seeking his (Itoo's) removal and another meant for election of Deputy Speaker.

A bitter controversy was allowed on the floor of the House when Ali Mohammed Naik, Minister for Education, got up soon after Itoo entered to preside over the proceedings. Naik called for an immediate change in the list of business. He took a high tone as he pointed out that the treasury benches were for the removal of Itoo to be followed by introduction of motion of confidence in the Shah ministry. Tempers ran high when pro-Farooq members—P.L. Handoo, Wali Mohammed Itoo, Mohammed Shafi, Ali Mohammed Sagar and Mubarak Gul—repeatedly ridiculed flamboyant Naik. For about 20 minutes the House bore the resemblance of a typical fish market, with pro-Congress and pro-Shah MLAs, 43 in number, and 32 pro-Farooq legislators shouting at each other. They engaged themselves in verbal duels and show of fists. Interestingly, Shah and his deputy Chief Minister, Thakur, kept quiet only to watch their men engaged in the war of attrition against Farooq Abdullah and his supporters. Flashpoint came when Sardar Rangil Singh, a senior Congress MLA, proceeded to occupy the Speaker's chair after the motion tabled and adopted by the voice vote by the treasury benches declared that Itoo had been

dismissed. And in free for all at the Speaker's podium, members of the two opposing sides were seen tearing and swearing at each other. Some of them did not hesitate to exchange blows in which at least ten members received minor injuries.

An unprecedented scene, however, was witnessed when nearly 40 men left their seats in the visitors' gallery and joined the fray on the floor of the House on the side of the treasury benches. These men were security commandos in mufti and planted by the government there for an assault on the pro-Farooq legislators. Itoo was physically removed from his chair. His fault : He aligned himself with the deposed Chief Minister and disqualified 15 National Conference MLAs who had defected and pledged their loyalty and support to Shah. Farooq was dazed and, in a fit of perturbation, he ordered his members out of the House soon after his remark : "Shah and his men have murdered democracy and thrown to winds all qualms of conscience and decency." The demand voiced by Naik for immediate change in the list of business had not surprised political observers in Srinagar. Reason : Chief Minister Shah himself told a news conference at his house on 30 July that the leader of the House, Naik, could easily press for the motion for removal of Itoo, to be followed by other things including the motion of confidence in the council of ministers.

Shah's announcement to this effect had followed Itoo's order disqualifying 15 MLAs despite the State high court's verdict which made it clear that 12 MLAs, who had joined the Shah camp, were not defectors under the State's anti-defection law. Farooq and his men were seen looking for something when the Assembly session opened. Farooq's supporters, Abdul Gani Lone and Bhim Singh, were conspicuous by their absence in the House. Police detained both of them when they were on their way to the Assembly premises. Outside the House tight security was in evidence and paramilitary forces, armed with automatics and in full battle dress, had ringed the Assembly complex. Entry was regulated by passes issued by the government and guard at the entrance carried metal detectors to prevent carrying of any offensive weapon inside. And, inside the Assembly complex, entrants were subjected to thorough checks at a number of points.

Hours before the commencement of the session over 7 lakh residents of Srinagar were forced to stay indoors by the curfew imposed by the authorities in the wake of Farooq Abdullah's call for total general strike in Kashmir in protest against the unconstitutional overthrow of his 13-month-old government. Not a soul was seen moving on the otherwise busy streets in Srinagar. The entire transport was off the road. Attendance in government offices was next to nothing. Educational institutions stayed shut for the 13th day on 31 July. Chief Minister, Shah, explained that curfew had been imposed to prevent loss of human lives. "I do not want blood to be spilled", said Shah who had, by then, earned the nickname of "Gul curfew", apparently for long periods of curfew that his government imposed to meet the situation created by the dismissal of the Farooq government.

And yet there were deaths when police fired in the three localities in the interior of the Srinagar city on 1 August. Interesting was Shah's altered explanation : Police firing became necessary when groups of violent demonstrators sought to hold part of the city to ransom. Equally interesting was Farooq's rejoinder : "My followers came out only after they were provoked by Shah's storm-troopers. And there was no justification for police firing on innocent people." The police firing and resultant deaths had swept the strings. A bitter controversy was triggered off by the sharp difference of opinion between the state administration and Farooq's National Conference party over the number of dead. There were deaths as police opened fire. But the conflicting statements by the two sides had created confusion worse confounded. Naturally, therefore, many Kashmiris, including newsmen, had a reason as they insisted on a "correct" answer to their question : "What was the actual number of deaths?" While the State police authorities decided to stick to their figure of three, the deposed Chief Minister and his supporters claimed that the firings had resulted in the death of at least 16 persons.

It was quite an event as, about a month after the installation of the Shah government, Farooq Abdullah's wife refused to leave Kashmir on an indefinite vacation in England. Farooq had made arrangements for his wife's journey to London. But

his wife whose maiden name is Mollie Pitcher took him at the rebound following the demand by her daughters for an opportunity to enable their father, Farooq, too to be with them in England. Mollie Pitcher knew it well that her husband could not leave Kashmir. And yet she wanted her daughters' demand to be fulfilled. Farooq ran fast and furious when his children wanted him to join them. The event took place after Farooq's son was given an affectionate send-off before his departure for Simla (Himachal Pradesh) to resume his studies there. Farooq and his mother did not want to enter into any argument when Mollie pointed out: "I cannot be expected to be tension-free in England with my husband in Srinagar and the only son in Simla." Mollie lived with her parents in Lowestoft Suffolk before marrying Farooq in September 1968. Farooq and Mollie first met in Great Yarmouth hospital where both of them were working: Farooq as a physician and Mollie as a nurse.

They fell in love with each other and married shortly after. They first decided to live in the U.K. but changed their mind after Farooq, at his father's bidding, returned to Kashmir. They have four children, three of them girls. Mollie continued to serve as matron in the Srinagar institute of medical sciences even after Farooq was installed as the Chief Minister in September 1982. And after the fall of Farooq on 2 July, Mollie felt upset and refused to go to the hospital. Shah was surprised, if not shocked, when his appeal to his mother-in-law to continue as vice-chairman of the State Gujjar and Bakerwal welfare board was rejected by her. Begum Akbar Jehan remarked: "I am not prepared to accept orders or pleas from the unconstitutional government headed by Shah."

6

Deceptive Peace

The tale of two brothers. Farooq Abdullah is the big brother who, though a controversial politician, has managed to retain his popularity among the Kashmiri masses. His small brother—and small he has proved to be in more than one way—is Tariq Abdullah who, unlike his big brother, could not command much influence. Tariq is just an ordinary person with no conviction, no consistency. He became an object of criticism in Kashmir and elsewhere not only during his father Sheikh Abdullah's regime but also after the dismissal of his brother Farooq's government in July 1984. His performance as the managing director of the State-run Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Development Corporation evoked a bitter public reaction. Many of those, directly or indirectly, connected with the Corporation, better known as TDC, faced tensions and dilemmas as a result of his foul tongue and unpleasant decisions and direction.

Some sections of the population, including several leaders and activists of the State's premier political organisation, National Conference, had ridiculed Sheikh Abdullah for his support to his son, Tariq, even when the latter was held responsible for the chaotic conditions inside the TDC. On more than one occasion, a section of the local press became highly critical of Tariq's unsatisfactory performance and "unworthy" behaviour. He remained untouched because of his father's support to him. The Sheikh had compulsions as, in spite of his awe-inspiring personality, he was afraid of his son, Tariq. Reason: Tariq

did not take long to scare away sensitive human beings by his foul tongue. After the death of Sheikh Abdullah, Tariq's importance, if any, became a thing of the past. That he could not be counted as a person of consequence became evident when, with the demise of the Sheikh, few found it necessary to knock at his door.

Even Farooq, as the Chief Minister, had attached little importance to Tariq. The latter was not given a suitable berth in the State's administrative set-up despite the oft-repeated plea by Begum Akbar Jehan for a key post for her son, Tariq. The small brother was, soon after the death of his father, said to have threatened his big brother of serious consequences if the former was not given a post of his choice. Farooq stuck to his decision: not to get cowed down by the impotent rage of his small brother. Tariq remained unemployed until the end of Farooq's government. But Tariq did not face uneasy problems and tensions like the most of the unemployed persons in Kashmir and elsewhere in India. Expectedly, he was found in ecstasies of joy when his big brother was ousted in the July 2 coup. Tariq attached himself to the apron-strings of G.M. Shah. The two had a reason to be satisfied with most of the mediamen in Kashmir and elsewhere when their statements and outbursts against Farooq and his men were played up. With the unexpected publicity he got for days together, Tariq thought that he could have the cake and eat it too.

A few days after Shah's installation as the State Chief Minister, Tariq drove to the civil secretariat in Srinagar. He embarrassed his brother-in-law, Shah, when, in a fit of rage, he thrashed a policeman on duty. The development evoked a bitter reaction not only from the aggrieved policeman but also from employees of the government. Shah was left with no alternative but to tender an apology soon after he had summoned the policeman in his office chamber. Tariq was not upset even when his elder sister, Begum Khalida, questioned his right to insult a government employee. Tariq had one-point programme: Bring pressure to bear upon his sister and brother-in-law until he got a job. He was motivated by the desire to find himself in the Shah cabinet. But he was appointed as the director of the prestigious State-owned convention complex in Srinagar. He

accepted the post, for it was equivalent to the head of a department. But he could not satisfy himself, for he had already become ambitious for the post of a minister in the Shah cabinet.

Tariq tried, on more than one occasion, to pressurise Shah and Begum Khalida. On finding Shah unwilling to make him a member of the Legislative Council and minister at the same time, Tariq decided against continuing his support to his brother-in-law. In March 1985, he called on his big brother whose house is just adjacent to the one occupied by the small brother on the famous Gupkar Road in Srinagar. The meeting between the two was followed by an unambiguous statement announcing Tariq's separation from the Shah camp and "unity of hearts" between the big brother and small brother. And, on 2 April, came a statement which announced Tariq's resignation from the post of the director of the convention complex and from the membership of the working committee of the National Conference faction headed by Khalida. In a remarkable volte-face, Tariq tendered an unqualified apology to Farooq for having called him a "security risk" in 1984.

In his statement, Tariq berated Chief Minister, Shah, for his failure to tone up working of the State administration and eradicate corruption. He said that the Shah government should have resigned after the crushing defeat suffered by the ruling National Conference faction at the hands of Farooq's party in the Lok Sabha poll in Kashmir. "But the refusal to abide by the honoured traditions of democracy has come as a shock to all those who cherish democracy", added he. Before his statement was made public, Tariq was said to have virtually touched Farooq's feet in the latter's home. Calling Farooq a "security risk" was, according to Tariq, a "blatant untruth said in a moment of anger which had stemmed from Dr. Farooq Abdullah's correct stand in refusing to take advice from me on the administrative matters in which I had no business to meddle". The two brothers eventually joined hands in an apparent bid to embarrass their brother-in-law and his government. But Tariq could not be expected to make any impact on the political scene as the Kashmir population regarded him as a non-political entity.

The opposition National Conference with Farooq as its star-hero ruined morale of the ruling National Conference faction and Congress(I) in Kashmir in December 1984. The defeat of the candidates put up by Congress (I) and Shah's National Conference in the three Lok Sabha constituencies of the Kashmir Valley produced a sensation on the political scene. Totally upset by the victory of Farooq's nominees, the defeated parties began to insist on their allegations of poll rigging which, according to them, put to rout the candidates of the party in power and Congress(I). Numerous, indeed, were the Kashmiris who turned a deaf ear to the allegations of election mal-practices. Farooq Abdullah and his supporters had strong reasons to be satisfied with the outcome. Even the local administration, especially the police authorities, did not welcome attempts at kicking up a controversy over the alleged poll rigging. The December 24 poll and subsequent repoll in 31 polling booths in Kashmir on 27 December involved a spectacular public participation.

Considering the Congress(I) and Shah's party as undisputed foes of Kashmir's distinct identity, a number of local people were found in parts of the Valley insisting on the "increased utility" of the slogan that, curiously, proclaimed: "Vote for Farooq's party if you desire to preserve Kashmir's distinct identity against the growing threat from New Delhi." Unconditional support by leaders and activists of Awami Action Committee, People's Conference, Kashmir unit of the Akali Dal, Ittehadul Muslimeen and Tableegul Islam to the opposition National Conference created conditions conducive to Farooq's call to the Kashmiris for their cooperation to enable him to fight for preservation of Kashmir's autonomy. As the battle of ballot was interpreted by hundreds of Kashmiri Muslims as the fight between the "oppressed and oppressor (ruling party at the Centre)", a decisive change took place on the political scene making the going tough for the Congress (I) and Shah's party in three parliamentary constituencies. In spite of the poll boycott by the Muslim-dominated political groups—Jamati-i-Islami, Jamait-i-Tulba, Mahzi Azadi and People's League—Farooq Abdullah's party received behind-the-scene support from quite a few activists of these groups. Although majority of members

and supporters of these extremist groups opposed the conduct of elections in the context of the "unresolved dispute" on Kashmir, there was no visible effort by any one of them to prevent Muslims from casting their votes. This helped the opposition National Conference whose leading campaigners had already appealed to the members of the majority community to unite themselves for a "bigger fight" against the Delhi-backed Congress(I) and usurper government headed by Shah.

As Farooq Abdullah was keen on winning the elections in the Kashmir Valley presumably to tell the world that the dismissal of his government in the July 2 coup was undemocratic and unjustified, he did not object to the manner adopted by some of his associates and followers to label the ruling party and Congress(I) in the State as "anti-Muslim". Conversely, Congress(I) and Shah's National Conference sought to prove that the action against Farooq's government had some measure of public support. But their scheme of things floundered on rocks as a result of the demonstration of a massive public support to the opposition National Conference. The defeat of the Congress (I) and the Shah camp in the three Lok Sabha constituencies—Anantnag, Srinagar and Baramulla—proved Farooq a popular leader, much more acceptable to the masses than his estranged brother-in-law. Those critical of Shah were fully satisfied with the defeat of his son, Muzaffar Shah, who lost even his security deposit in the Srinagar constituency.

The development was not taken well by Muzaffar Shah's parents. Muzaffar's mother, Khalida, was furious despite the fact that, unlike her husband, she was accounted to be gifted with an even temper. She did not want to avenge the defeat of her son in the December poll. Her indignation was, indeed, directed against something unworthy: Corrupt practices indulged in by some of her "advisers" and fawning parasites before and during the poll. She was apprised of the size and nature of their mal-practices. But she was hesitant to disclose their identity although her violent displeasure was, undoubtedly, accompanied by an impulse to retaliate. Khalida had apprised her husband, Shah, of the pattern of resentment among some political and social circles against the misappropriation of money received by some "self-styled advisers" for launching a powerful pre-poll

publicity campaign in favour of the ruling party candidates in Kashmir. And although misappropriation of funds on this account alone was put at Rs. 2 lakhs, Shah and Khalida decided against raking up the controversial issue outside their residential premises in Srinagar. Reason : They did not want to cause shame to some of their sycophants, three of whom had, significantly, manipulated to come closer to the ruling family before they were accused of having taken lion's share from the booty.

About two months before the Lok Sabha poll in the State, G.M. Shah found himself in a quandary. Despite his reputation for being a strong man, he failed to come to grips with the situation following the July 2 coup in Kashmir. Shah was restless with the growing public criticism against his inability to ensure tension-free atmosphere in his homeland. As Farooq Abdullah proved himself a hard nut to crack, Shah invited suggestions from his sympathisers in the State and in the Indian capital to enable him to deal with the challenge posed by his brother-in-law and his political allies. The challenge had assumed serious proportions with Dr. Abdullah's decision to bring all major towns and villages in the State within the ambit of his "non-cooperation" movement against the Congress(I)-backed government in Kashmir. It was apparently in this context that Shah requested New Delhi for two additional battalions of paramilitary forces to help cope with the situation.

Shah's request came in the wake of reports that a section of the local police had become somewhat desperate with overwork since the dismissal of Farooq's government. Since then most of the areas remained under curfew for at least 73 days. The development was first of its kind in Kashmir's post-independence period. People had resented the imposition of curfew more often than not since Farooq's ouster. Many of them were found vociferous in their criticism against what they described as "usurper" government of Shah. They called him "Gul curfew", a name he earned for curfew that his government repeatedly imposed on the city of Srinagar since his installation as the Chief Minister. If anything, the people in the Kashmir Valley are known to be adept in the art of coining

instant nicknames. Perhaps no other people, at least in India, can beat them at the game.

Even Sheikh Abdullah was not spared. His critics called him "Budda Bazigar" (oldie juggler). His immediate successor in August 1953 as the Premier of Jammu and Kashmir, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, earned the sobriquet of "gogga" (traitor). G.M. Sadiq was perhaps the only exception but, before him, Shamsuddin, the man who replaced Bakshi as head of the government, albeit for a period of 100 days, was honoured with the title of "Shama Kuth" (Shams the ram). Sadiq's successor, Mir Qasim, got "anda bhavan" (palace of eggs) attached to his name after it was rumoured that two lakh fifty thousand eggs had gone into the material used for constructing his palatial residence in a posh Srinagar colony, Barzulla. Came Farooq Abdullah and instantly he became "disco Chief Minister" for his style of functioning. Curiously, two factions of the National Conference party, one led by Farooq and the other headed by Shah's wife Khalida, also earned characteristic nicknames. While the Farooq camp was known as "DNC" (disco National Conference), the Shah faction was honoured with the title of "CNC" (curfew National Conference).

A new element was introduced in the political situation when Indian Premier, Mrs. Gandhi, arrived in Srinagar by a special plane of the Indian Air Force before noon on 27 October—barely a day after the first phase of "non-cooperation" movement was launched in the Valley. "I wish it had coincided with my visit", she cryptically remarked as I approached her at the airport for her comment on Farooq Abdullah's "non-cooperation" stir. Her visit to Kashmir was, unexpectedly, brief. She stayed in Srinagar for 27 hours. She had flown in despite Chief Minister G.M. Shah's plea seeking postponement of her visit. The proposal was floated days before the deposed Chief Minister launched the first phase of his campaign on 26 October. Mrs. Gandhi had originally planned to be in Srinagar on 26 October. Shah and top echelons of the State administration were sounded in mid-October about the Prime Minister's intention to undertake a trip to Kashmir from 26 October. Apparently assailed by the fear of some trouble with the launching of "non-

cooperation" movement by Farooq's supporters, Shah deputed the State's chief secretary, Mir Nassrullah, to Delhi with the ostensible purpose of trying for postponement of Mrs. Gandhi's visit.

Mir Nassrullah met several influential men in the Indian capital. As he had been directed in Srinagar to adopt a cautious approach while in Delhi, Nassrullah referred to certain aspects of the State's political situation in his meetings with principal confidants of the Prime Minister. But Mrs. Gandhi did not oblige those who had wanted her to visit Kashmir in the first week of November. She had, as was expected, learnt through official intelligence bulletins all about the purpose and impact of Farooq's campaign. She had a reason to be unruffled as the pro-Farooq National Conference party adopted a low profile on 26 October. Mrs. Gandhi's arrival in Srinagar followed instructions from New Delhi, urging the local authorities and Congress (I) party to avoid organising any kind of reception in honour of the Prime Minister. Swift, indeed, were the operations to ensure security for Mrs. Gandhi. Police and paramilitary forces were pressed into service at numerous places. Several men and officials of the telecommunications circle had a tough time as, during the cold night intervening 26 October and 27 October, they took at least six hours to provide emergency telephone connections and hot line at the Chashma Shahi guest house before the Prime Minister flew in, wearing the typical Punjabi dress—blue kurta, churidar pyjama and matching dupata. Only two men from the telecommunications department were allowed to stay put when the authorities directed armed policemen to be on the alert around the guest house before sunrise on 27 October.

Mrs. Gandhi's visit to Srinagar was not without significance. It was politically important, notwithstanding her statement that she had come to take and enjoy the changing colour of chinar trees. Mrs. Gandhi was not all praise for the Shah government as, according to her, the ruling party had failed to make its presence felt after the ouster of the Farooq regime. She did not differ with Shah as the latter called for greater financial assistance from the Centre. But she wanted Shah and his govern-

ment to assert itself. She did not show indifference to the Chief Minister and his cabinet colleagues when they called on her in the guest house. But her exercise designed, as it was, to pose questions, one after another, was apparently meant to set them thinking anew. It was perhaps in this context that on her arrival she was reticent to discuss utility of the alliance between Congress(I) and Shah's National Conference faction. With Mrs. Gandhi's return to Delhi on 28 October, Shah and his men were provided with clear indications of the Prime Minister's displeasure over the poor performance of the State government.

India's "iron lady", as Mrs. Gandhi was called by many at home and abroad, spent 27 hours in Srinagar, never knowing that it was her last trip to Kashmir. It was not unknown that Mrs. Gandhi had, earlier, reacted adversely if anybody insisted on garlanding her. It was apparently in this context that Jammu and Kashmir Governor, Jagmohan, had quietly sounded leaders of the ruling National Conference and Congress(I) as well as senior civil and military officials at the Srinagar airport on the need to present only bouquets to the Prime Minister. In the process, her controversial political assistant and confidant, Makhan Lal Fotedar also felt elated as a couple of Congressmen presented him bouquets. Mrs. Gandhi and her grand children were given a warm welcome at the airport. There was a sparkle of cold in the air when they flew in from Delhi. But the vicinity of Srinagar, especially the area around the Chashma Shahi guest house where they stayed as guests of the State government, presented a charming look with pleasant climate and a variety of colourful flowers running riot. On her arrival in the guest house, overlooking the Dal Lake, Mrs. Gandhi witnessed a marvellous transformation of might chinar trees: They had turned scarlet, a sight of almost unreal beauty against the quietening Valley.

Mrs. Gandhi wore a Kashmiri shawl before she joined her grand children for a quiet lunch on the spacious lawns of the guest house. Her lunch had followed a hot cup of tea with Jagmohan and G.M. Shah during her hurried meeting with them. Mrs. Gandhi's grand children liked salad served on the table

as part of their mid-day meals. While eating lettuce, the eldest child of Rajiv Gandhi suddenly pleaded : "Dadi Ma aap hum ko akalay nahi chodna (grand mother you should not leave us alone)". "Rest assured I shall be with you", quick came the assurance from Mrs. Gandhi. There was no provocation for the child to enquire of Mrs. Gandhi's engagements. Yet it was ascertained that Mrs. Gandhi would not leave them alone. After the lunch the Prime Minister went inside the bungalow to change her dress. While doing so her "ruddar mala" (necklace of beads worn as charm against evil and used in counting her prayers) was said to have suddenly fallen on the carpet, near her feet. It was something unexpected. But she avoided showing signs of perturbation, for she had wanted her grand children to be cheerful.

Curiously, the eldest child (Rajiv's daughter) insisted on being in Mrs. Gandhi's arms when Makhan Lal Fotedar entered the room for a brief discussion with her on her engagements scheduled for the afternoon that day. The two children were taken care of by their ayah who had also flown in along with them. And Mrs. Gandhi was left alone for some time until she got ready for her meeting with Shah and members of his ministry. Mrs. Gandhi had planned a visit to a couple of shrines on the outskirts of Srinagar on Sunday, 28 October. However, in view of the existence of scores of undesirable elements in the city, the law and order authorities did not want them to surface in the course of Mrs. Gandhi's journey to the shrines. An attempt was made to bring about a change in her programme. In this connection, the State police chief, Peer Ghulam Hassan Shah, roped in Fotedar. Interestingly, the religious importance of Saturday evening was highlighted when Fotedar approached Mrs. Gandhi. She accepted his suggestion and, without any reservation, she stirred out after her dinner, around 8.30.

Mrs. Gandhi, accompanied by Fotedar, started for the ancient Chakreshwari temple and the Muslim shrine of saint Mukhdoom Saheb atop the Hariparbat hill. Inside the temple, she joined a group of Kashmiri Pandits and offered prayers lasting at least 20 minutes. She bowed down by her knees in

front of an impressive idol inside the temple. Outside the temple she looked around for a short while before she started for the Mukhdoom Saheb shrine. She smilingly accepted a bunch of flowers from the Maulvi who, according to Kashmir's deputy inspector-general of police, Ali Mohammed Watali, wished her a long life. Mrs. Gandhi's visit to the two shrines had followed her quiet session with Swami Lakshmanji, a well-known saint and scholar, at the latter's ashram near the Nishat garden in Srinagar. "Indiraji was perhaps conscious that her end was not far off", said the Swami after Mrs. Gandhi's assassination. He told me that although there was no discussion on life and death during his meeting with Mrs. Gandhi, he could guess that she was more tense than before.

Following the sunrise on 28 October Mrs. Gandhi suddenly announced her decision to move out of the guest house and buy a few items in the nearby market. Kashmir's chief secretary, Nassrullah, got nervous as, in the absence of adequate security arrangements, he did not want her to stir out. Mrs. Gandhi looked adamant. She did not wait for elaborate security measures. "Time is not far off when your securitymen will fail to save me", she told Nassrullah. And out she went on a brief visit to the Dalgate area in Srinagar. A few hours after her hurried shopping, she flew back to Delhi never to return to Kashmir. Before she drove to the Srinagar airport she told me in the Chashma Shahi guest house that people of India had to be vigilant in the context of the induction of highly sophisticated weapons system across the Indian borders. In the course of a seven-minute interview, she said : "We want peace but we shall not allow violation of our territory and borders."

Mrs. Gandhi called for the revival of spirit of nationalism which, she said, was being eroded by people spreading separatism in the name of religion, tradition and language. She wanted her countrymen to sink their differences and to stand like a rock to face new challenges. She criticised the Indian opposition parties for showing little awareness of the external threat to India. The opposition parties seemed to be playing into the hands of powers engaged in weakening India. Her apathy to her politi-

cal foes was apparently the product of her unabated desire to hold reins of power with her Congress party alone to be projected as the only effective forum to ensure peace and progress in India.

7

Search and Subversion

An elite intelligence agency of the Indian government had an interesting tale to tell before the year, 1985, ran out. It was an account of American intelligence agency's secret experiments with urine of some of the prominent personalities of the world. What for? Results of such experiments intended to determine exact health and likely age of subjects, apparently for policy matters, formed part of the Agency's dossiers on world leaders. The agency, better known as CIA, was not surprised by the death of Sheikh Abdullah on 8 September 1982. The CIA had found the Sheikh sinking gradually after the examination of his urine somewhere in the United States two and a half months before he breathed his last.

Two unidentified American visitors and collected sample of Sheikh Abdullah's urine in Srinagar in mid-June 1982 before it was flown to America for clinical experiments. Indian doctors who had attended on the 78-year-old Abdullah until he was declared dead, were fully aware of the organic complicity of the Kashmir leader. But none of them was reported to have drawn a definite conclusion in connection with the Sheikh's span of life with the help of their experiments with his urine. Among the important subjects chosen, in the recent years, by the CIA for its secret experiments with their urine were the Indian Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Chinese leaders—Mao and Chou—Soviet leader Leonard Brezhnev, American President, Richard Nixon, and Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, and King Farouq of Egypt.

The Indian intelligence agency's report suggested that Mrs. Gandhi's urine was subject of the secret test when she was on

a visit to the United States in 1982. Men of the CIA had planted themselves in and around the building where she had stayed in New York. And as she entered the bathroom the CIA men inside gave a coughing signal which alerted one or two members of their team outside who immediately took the sample of the Indian Prime Minister's piss as it flowed from the urinal to sewer. Earlier, around May 1966, the CIA conducted similar tests on Mao and Chou. This was when the Chinese MIG aircraft downed the US warplane which, flying over North Vietnam, had strayed and crossed into the Chinese air space. Three South Vietnamese military leaders—General Khanh, General Theiu and General Ky—were subjected to similar tests reportedly at the instance of the American Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) in Robert McNamara's time as Secretary of State in 1961.

The report said that even Nixon and Kissinger were not spared. Their urines were tested at the suggestion of the former CIA Director, Richard Helms. More interesting was the story of how the CIA team obtained the piss of King Farouq of Egypt. The team rigged men's room of one of the casinos in Monte Carlo when King Farouq was there. Using a special device the CIA team collected his urine as it flowed from the urinal to sewer and the entire operation was conducted without the knowledge of the owner of the establishment. Leonard Brezhnev's piss was obtained during one of his trips to Yugoslavia. The CIA had reportedly determined the state of health and likely age of Brezhnev in early 1980 when the Soviet leader complained of exhaustion and listlessness. According to the report, secret experiments were also conducted with the urine of Morarji Desai after he formed his government in New Delhi in 1977.

Yet another sensational account of how a former Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir had allowed himself to be in the pay of Pakistan for over a decade was disclosed in a voluminous report prepared by a team of intelligence sleuths of the Indian Home Ministry. Classified as "top secret", the report was drawn up after a sustained exercise lasting at least five years. The researchers did not confine themselves in Kashmir only while collecting oral and documentary evidence; their study also covered—indeed, with the help of counter-intelli-

gence outfits—a host of persons on the other side of the Kashmir border as the "source information" about Pakistan's clandestine monetary transactions in Jammu and Kashmir.

The report identified a former Chief Minister. It had also established identity of some of his close relations including his wife who had also received financial assistance from across the border without any hesitation. "For heaven's sake do not let the cat out of the bag", pleaded a senior official of the Indian Home Ministry in an informal chat with me in Srinagar. "New Delhi will strike me off the rolls if you publicised names of those who were secretly financed by Pakistan", he said and added that he, too, wanted to remain anonymous. He, however, disclosed: "Flow of money from across the Kashmir border started with the governmental changeover in August 1953". A former Chief Minister alone was not in the pay of Pakistan. Apart from his close relations, more than 700 Kashmiris including politicians and student and religious leaders had obtained huge sums of money from Pakistan.

Based on what was described "duly verified oral and documentary evidence", the report also contained dossiers on 15 Kashmiri politicians, including a former Chief Minister, members of his family, about half a dozen former ministers and three members of the government that was formed in Kashmir by Sheikh Abdullah's son-in-law, G.M. Shah, soon after the dismissal of Farooq Abdullah's government on 2 July 1984. Interestingly, at least ten legislators had also found a place in the report as "recipients" of money from across the border before they changed sides and started advocating the need for stronger ties between Kashmir and the Indian Union. The Home Ministry's report had also been based on documentary evidence available in the files of the Kashmir home department, police and CID. A hurried study of the report brought into focus identity of numerous officials of the Indian and State governments who had provided "relevant information regarding several recipients of money from Pakistan". The officials identified in the report included, among others, two former police chiefs, Surendra Nath and Peer Ghulam Hassan Shah, former divisional commissioners—S. Banerji, Anwar Karim, T.C.A. Srinivas Vardhan—former State home secretary, G.R.

Renzu, three retired DIGs, Ghulam Qadir Ganderbali Ghulam Rasool and J.N. Hashia, a former SP (CID), Hakim Qamaruddin, besides some Indian government officials, especially Hamir Singh, J.N. Saksena, Y.S. Jafa, Amar Bhushan, J.K. Dewan, S.M. Agrawal, Bikram Sood and former IB bosses in Kashmir—Mathur and Saighal.

Significant, indeed, was the material collected from a raft of letters and files maintained by the State CID on the clandestine flow of Pakistani financial assistance to several Kashmiri politicians and student and religious leaders. Equally significant was G.R. Renzu's disclosure. According to the report, Renzu came across a Kashmiri Muslim woman of Khanyar in Srinagar years ago. The woman who had managed setting up of "underground links with some activists on the other side of the border" was once given a bag (containing several thousand rupees) by an unidentified Pakistani intruder for a former Chief Minister of Kashmir. A letter, written in Urdu language, enclosed with the bag had made the issue quite clear: An amount of Rs. 7,000 for the woman, while the rest of the money to be quietly handed over to the "principal character"—the former Chief Minister. The woman did not open the bag. She called on the "principal character" and told him that a sum of Rs. 7,000 had been sent in on her name. She felt totally upset when she received only "thanks" from him. The report quoted Renzu as having said: "This woman was not given even a penny and, as such, she had a reason to curse him (the former Chief Minister) for his unsatiated greed."

According to the report, two ladies closely related to the "principal character" had secretly received unspecified number of gold biscuits and coins on more than one occasion from across the border. A sensational account, in this connection, was given by two Pakistanis who were intercepted by Indian border guards at a place close to the ceasefire line in Uri in Kashmir, the report said, adding that the captured intruders were on their way back to the Pakistan-held territory after their undetected entry into Srinagar and subsequent meeting with the two ladies "under the same roof". The two intruders had also spoken about their links with some "committed friends" in Kashmir. Of these "committed friends" of Pakistan, at least

two got themselves conveniently accommodated in the government which was installed, at the instance of New Delhi, immediately after the unceremonious ouster of Farooq's government. A close relative of one of the ministers operated as "contact-man" of the "Kashmir Staff", an official agency of Pakistan with its headquarters based in Sialkot, across Suchetgarh in the Jammu region, the report disclosed.

One more disclosure made by the report was on the clandestine exchange of verbal and written messages, including letters, between Pakistan and some Kashmiri politicians. As a former Chief Minister was regarded as the "principal character", most of the messages, oral and written, were for him. On one occasion, the "principal character" sent out his reply to the Pakistan President, Gen. Zia-ul-Haq's communication through a local Muslim religious leader who happened to visit Pakistan on valid travel documents some years ago, the report said and went on to say that the story was divulged by the latter after he fell out with the former and joined the Delhi-backed Congress (I) party in Jammu and Kashmir. A brief account of how a handful of Kashmiris including a former member of Indian Parliament had entered into a secret deal with some foreigners on the question of making available for Pakistan "increased sums of Indian currency of different denomination" was also disclosed in the report. It said that as Pakistan was in search of "adequate stocks of Indian currency notes for facilitating the task of its agents and spies on this side of the border", a plan was drawn up to cultivate trusted men holding international passports for acquiring Indian currency. Indian rupee was exchanged for dollar and pound.

An important event took place in February 1984. It was New Delhi's decision to assert itself in Kashmir. With the assassination of Indian diplomat, Mhatre, after he was kidnapped in Birmingham, men of Indian intelligence outfits were alerted in Jammu and Kashmir and ordered by New Delhi to examine, in depth, reports about the growth in subtle contact between a set of Kashmiris and pro-Pakistan lobby in Britain. Ravindra Mhatre's death was followed by a serious situation necessitating the powers that be in Delhi to execute Maqbool Butt, a condemned prisoner, in the Tihar jail in the Indian

capital. Farooq Abdullah, who was then Kashmir's Chief Minister, briefly spoke in the Legislative Assembly on 6 February on the murder of the Indian diplomat and on activities of the UK-based Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF). Knowledgeable functionaries of the Indian Intelligence agencies were astonished, if not agitated, by Farooq's unexpected verdict: "Birmingham-based JKLF has been working for the liberation of Pakistan-held Kashmir".

A sensational account of the executed Pakistani national Maqbool Butt's involvement in operations aimed at setting up of squads of spies, saboteurs and terrorists in Indian Kashmir was disclosed in a voluminous report prepared by an official intelligence agency. Classified as "top secret", the report has been based on a set of documents said to have been obtained by the men of a field intelligence unit and on a series of statements Maqbool had himself recorded when he was first interrogated in 1966 and later in 1976 following his re-arrest in a Kashmir village. Notwithstanding the active opposition by a set of politicians and bureaucrats in Pakistan to his activities, Butt was motivated by a "fervent desire" to mastermind hit-and-run tactics against Indian agents and installations in Kashmir. And in spite of the simplicity he had retained until he was a student in the St. Joseph School at Baramulla (Kashmir), Maqbool looked a changed man after the major political development culminating in the dismissal and arrest of Sheikh Abdullah in August 1953.

Maqbool Butt had, after completing his college, crossed over to Pakistan in 1958. A study of the intelligence agency's dossier on Maqbool brings into focus the nature of sympathy he had, at one stage, received from several politicians and senior members of the armed forces in Pakistan and Pakistan-held "Azad Kashmir". Among others who did not want him and his gang to be discouraged were Pakistan's former Prime Minister, Z.A. Bhutto, three ministers in his cabinet—Maulana Kausar Niazi, Aziz Ahmed and Mumtaz Ali Bhutto—former air chief, Asghar Khan, and army chief, Tikka Khan, as well as former Presidents of "Azad Kashmir", K.H. Khurshid and Sardar Ibrahim. The dossier contains a statement purporting to have been made by Maqbool in connection with the "links"

he had established with many others including some functionaries of Pakistan's intelligence bureau, military intelligence directorate and commando units in "Azad Kashmir" and in Lahore, Gujranwala, Rawalpindi and Peshawar.

Maqbool Butt was arrested following the murder of a State CID official, Amar Chand, in the Kuinel village near Handwara on 14 August 1966 when armed policemen encircled the vulnerable hideout and were engaged in an exchange of fire with some Pakistani intruders with Maqbool as the group captain of the "OID" (operations against the Indian domination). Subsequent investigations by police and sleuths of various intelligence agencies yielded a rather ominous account of some Kashmiri leaders and officials having been included in the "hit list" prepared by Maqbool's gang. Among others who had figured in Maqbool's "hit list" were Kashmir's former Chief Minister, G.M. Sadiq, former President of the State Congress party, Mir Qasim, police chief, Peer Ghulam Hassan Shah, Kashmir's SP (CID), Abdul Majid Lone, and a former inspector-general of police, Surendra Nath. A significant addition in the "hit list" was made by Maqbool himself after he, along with his two accomplices, escaped from the Srinagar central jail in December 1968 and crossed over to Pakistan. Provoked by the death sentence awarded to him for the murder of Amar Chand, Maqbool had added to the "hit list" the name of a former sessions judge, N.K. Ganjoo, who had found him guilty and recommended execution by hanging.

The report adds that Maqbool who had founded a militant organisation known as National Liberation Front (NLF) favoured "direct action" by way of blowing up certain civil and defence installations, bridges and telecommunication channels especially in the strategic areas in north and north-west of Kashmir. The dossier claims that significant disclosures were made by Maqbool after his re-arrest in Langet near Handwara in 1976 when, following the death of an official of Jammu and Kashmir Bank in firing by him and his accomplices, he was found unexpectedly communicative during interrogation in Srinagar. The dossier quoted him as having divulged that, after hoisting Pakistani flags in Peshawar on 14 August 1965, he emerged "victorious" as he cultivated three important activists—

Amanullah Khan (operating in the UK as leader of the JKLF), Mir Abdul Qayum and Amanullah, editor of a Karachi magazine (Voice of Kashmir)—in the formation of National Liberation Front.

"After the announcement of our decision at a meeting with these men supporting the setting up of NLF, a sum of Rs. 20,000 was made available in the initial stage for our campaign seeking freedom for Kashmiris", Maqbool disclosed and added: "While G.M. Lone, owner of two carpet manufacturing factories in Pakistan, donated Rs. 13,000, contribution from Abdul Qayum and Amanullah was of the order of Rs. 7,000". Announcement of the formation of NLF was made after setting up of four committees—"action group" with Major Amanullah Khan as its leader, "communications and coordination wing" with Maqbool as its convener, "political and plebiscite wing" under the leadership of editor Amanullah and "finance cell" under the stewardship of Abdul Qayum and G.M. Lone. Originally a resident of Kashmir, Lone had latter settled in Karachi. After Maqbool's contact with him in Peshawar in 1962, Lone offered to accommodate Maqbool as his partner in the carpet manufacturing business. "This provided not only financial relief to me but also an opportunity to use Lone for the political activity I had launched in Pakistan and Azad Kashmir", stated Maqbool. After the last round of talks between the then minister for foreign affairs of Pakistan, Z.A. Bhutto, and his Indian counterpart, Sardar Swaran Singh, in Delhi in May 1963, Maqbool Butt was introduced to Amanullah Khan, then serving as an army major of "Azad Kashmir Rifles" (AKR), by the latter's brother Inayat Ullah Khan, in Peshawar. "After he was relieved by the Azad Kashmir Rifles in early 1964, Amanullah Khan settled in Peshawar where he owned a furniture manufacturing shop known as Kashmir Industries", Maqbool said. After the death of Khan's brother, Inayat, in 1965, "I spent most of my time with Amanullah Khan, more often than not, engaged him in academic discussions on the future of Kashmir as I was all along of the opinion that there should be a political settlement of the Kashmir issue, Indian domination in Kashmir notwithstanding."

"Interestingly, Amanullah Khan and several others in my

group had seen eye to eye with my proposal favouring an Algerian-type struggle to free Kashmiris from the Indian occupation", the dossier quoted Maqbool as saying during his interrogation in 1976. Earlier, in 1966, Maqbool had no reservation when, after his arrest, he was asked by Abdul Majid Lone, then a junior official in the State CID, about the reasons behind his clandestine entry into Pakistan-held "Azad Kashmir" in the late '50s. "I could not reconcile to the new political set-up brought about in Kashmir after Sheikh Abdullah's dismissal and arrest in 1953. The Sheikh's successor, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, had, much against the wishes of average Kashmiri, added some more laws to the armoury of repression", observed Maqbool. "Any citizen could be detained in prison for five years at a stretch and Bakshi's government was under no obligation to inform the detenu about the grounds of detention. The helpless victim could be re-arrested after release and detained for another term of five years."

Maqbool had crossed the border in Uri in southwest of Srinagar in 1958 along with his uncle, Abdul Aziz, and his niece, Raja. Maqbool's guide during the Uri border crossing was a Kashmiri shepherd, Gula by name. "On our arrival in Bulandshar in Azad Kashmir we were taken into custody by Pakistani guards for a short period", Maqbool replied when asked about the welcome he received on arriving in Pakistan. Maqbool's contact with the former POK President K.H. Khurshid was first established in 1962 when, before the Chinese invasion of India, Maqbool was involved with the extremist wing of "Azad Kashmir" Jamat-i-Islami in anti-India activity. According to the dossier, Maqbool visited parts of Gilgit Agency to "take stock of the situation as it developed after signing of the border agreement" between Beijing and Islamabad on 2 March 1963 by Z.A. Bhutto on behalf of Pakistan and Chen Yi, the then foreign minister of China. "I was not in favour of the agreement that enabled China to gain a foothold in the territory which, until 1947, was part and parcel of Jammu and Kashmir State", Maqbool said. At the same time, however, he was reported to have said: "On finding Chinese appreciation of our standpoint in support of a solution to the Kashmir problem in accordance with the wishes of people of Kashmir,

I started supporting Sino-Pak collaboration and cooperation."

Maqbool also disclosed that the NLF engaged some Pakistani ex-servicemen to impart training to anti-India activists in a small centre in Rawalpindi. "We did train up some Kashmiri youths who had, in twos and threes, secretly crossed over to Pakistan for the purpose", he said when asked to furnish details about NLF's contact with subversive elements in Kashmir. Hours after Maqbool's execution by hanging in the Tihar jail in Delhi, a senior official of the State government told me that there was evidence to prove that "quite a few militant youths from Srinagar and elsewhere had, in the past, evaded security net and were trained in NLF's Rawalpindi centre in the use of light arms". Significantly, one of them was rehabilitated and allowed to emerge as a well-to-do forest contractor in Kashmir by Sheikh Abdullah's government at the instance of Mirza Afzal Beg who was Deputy Chief Minister. Dr. Farooq Hyder was installed President of NLF in Rawalpindi after Maqbool's rearrest in Kashmir in 1976.

Maqbool Butt had sent out a communication to then Chinese foreign minister, Chen Yi, when the latter stretched a brief stop in Karachi into a six-hour conference with Z.A. Bhutto on 4 September 1965 while the war between Indian and Pakistani armed forces was going on. "My communication had, among other things, called for China's support to the action by Pakistan to repel the Indian armed provocation" Maqbool said. After Amanullah Khan moved out to Britain to set up the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, a decision was taken at an "emergency meeting" of NLF activists in Peshawar to involve men holding international passports in the "task of enlarging the scope and sphere of the movement seeking liberation of Kashmir", according to the dossier. Existence of terrorists within NLF was also confirmed when Maqbool's two accomplices—Abdul Hamid and Riaz Ahmed—were separately questioned following their detention in 1976. There was no place for lotus-eaters in NLF and in Amanullah Khan's JKLF. The identity of several trained saboteurs and spies loyal to Maqbool could not be concealed when Abdul Hamid and Riaz Ahmed were interrogated on more than one occasion. Son of Hakim Din, Hamid hailed from Peepalwala near Wazirabad in Gujranwala district, while Riaz resided in Yadgar chowk in Peshawar.

Indian "dogs" must quit Kashmir, said one of the many posters that appeared on the walls of Srinagar. After the hanging of Maqbool Butt such posters appeared in various parts of the State. In February, soon after the hanging of Butt, posters appeared asking the people to avoid the national highway, between Srinagar and Jammu, for nine days. Time-bombs had been planted on the highway, the posters said. These were not "paper threats". Bombs did explode rocking the Kashmir University campus and several other places. Later, a poster appeared bearing the slogan: "Long live Islamic revolution." The posters said that the blasts on the campus were to awaken the sleeping Muslims of Kashmir and make them realise their responsibilities. An organisation called the Kashmir Liberation Front (KLF) claimed that they were responsible for the blasts in Srinagar, Sopore and Anantnag. The KLF alleged that some of the Kashmiri leaders were playing with the fate of poor Kashmiris and that the "Kashmiri nation" was being turned to dust. They prepared a hit list. Farooq Abdullah, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, Maulvi Farooq, Syed Ali Shah Geelani and G.M. Shah were in the hit list.

And could the KLF ever forget N.K. Ganjoo, a former sessions judge? It was Ganjoo who had found Maqbool guilty of the murder of Amar Chand. The State government arranged security for those in the hit list. Yet, despite the presence of some policemen in mufti guarding Ganjoo's house, grenades burst in the yard. Two days after Maqbool was hanged in Delhi's Tihar jail, Ganjoo had received a bunch of printed posters warning him that he would not go unpunished. His friends advised him to move out to a safer place. But Ganjoo did not oblige them. Perhaps he felt that no place in the State was safe for him. The blasts and anti-India posters made Delhi swing into action. Security measures at vital Central and State installations were strengthened. New Delhi feared that more planes would be hijacked and preventive steps were taken.

But the most noteworthy step was the formation of an intelligence cell under the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) to track down anti-India elements. The cell was empowered to keep even the State investigation wings in the dark while

carrying out its job. Gary Saxena, then chief of the RAW, was in Kashmir at the time of the birth of the cell. Though the RAW chief played only the role of a midwife, the father of this new wing was R.N. Kao, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's national security adviser. Kao wanted a separate cell to be formed because the Farooq government had "failed" to meet the threat posed by extremists in Jammu and Kashmir. The KLF elements surfaced only after the Birmingham-based JKLF claimed responsibility for the kidnapping and murder of Indian Diplomat Ravindra Mhatre. One thing was clear : New Delhi did not trust Farooq's government in tackling the extremists. In fact, Delhi was found doing many things on its own to trace secessionist roots in India and abroad. R.N. Kao had made a secret trip to England. Later, three RAW men were sent to England to study the operations of an organisation called the Kashmir Liberation Movement (KLM). The KLM surfaced after the murder of Mhatre.

The KLM wanted both India and Pakistan to keep off Kashmir. A KLM pamphlet, printed in English and Urdu, said : "Kashmir belongs neither to India nor to Pakistan but only to Kashmiris. We want complete independence and we shall never accept anything short of that even if we have to go through fire and blood". Kao assigned detectives to trace the origin of the KLM and also to find out who all were associated with the printing and distribution of the pamphlets. That was the time when the KLM had claimed that it had the support of many British MPs whom it described as "friends and sponsors". The organisation even named some of them : Robert Parry, Eddie Loydon, Ernie Regrets and Ron Brown.

8

Fever and Fear

"Knowledge is a treasure; zeal without knowledge is like a fire without light." A reality, as it is. And you cannot refute it. Ironically, however, most of the Kashmiri Muslims have proved themselves opponents of all books of knowledge. Instances, in this connection, are numerous. A thing of the past, though, became quite an event in Kashmir in April 1984. The police went against a local writer. The step against him was, curiously, ordered about four years after he printed his book in Urdu language in Srinagar and circulated in parts of the State in May 1980. And the unostentatious writer, Tej Bahadur Bhan, was baffled by the action against him. Indeed, immediately after his arrest, he pleaded for a quick answer from a police official to his question : "Have you gone through my book"? It was not for the police official to have an academic discussion with Bhan as the latter had been rounded up on the charge that his book contained some objectionable material.

On the other hand, however, Bhan's close associates were intrigued when police lifted him and kept him in detention, though for a brief period. It was not unknown that Bhan's arrest had followed the protest demonstrations by activists of the militant Jamait-i-Tulba in Baramulla, 32 miles from Srinagar, against the book—"Pehchaan". Scores of Kashmiris, especially writers and intellectuals, found it difficult to appreciate the police action against Tej Bahadur Bhan. It was apparently in this context that 17 known writers and artists, including Ali Mohammad Lone, Autar Kishen Rahbar and Bansi Parimoo, demanded Bhan's release as, according to them, his detention had violated the freedom of expression. Happily for Bhan,

some opposition and Congress(I) members in the Indian Lok Sabha, in Delhi, also condemned the government, headed by Farooq Abdullah, for the writer's arrest after he had supported Darwin's theory of evolution in his book.

While most people began to think that this Darwin hatred had come rather late, Muslim fundamentalists in Jammu and Kashmir were dead earnest about keeping the "corrupting" influences away. These fundamentalists found Bhan's book highly objectionable and demanded it be banned and the writer prosecuted. There was already a long list of banned books in Kashmir and most people outside the State might have been surprised to find Bhagwat Gita in the ban list of Kashmir varsity. A case charging Bhan with attempt at hurting the sentiments of a particular community was registered. And Ali Mohammed Watali, then DIG of police, said that the police had launched a careful study of the issue. This was one positive fallout of the controversy since the study of the book could at least initiate policeman to literature and other intellectual pursuits.

That was the time when Kashmir's education department found itself in a quandary. A serious problem had cropped up, making it difficult for the authorities to support the quoted saying: "Knowledge is a treasure; zeal without knowledge is like a fire without light." In other words, valuable protestations by a section of the Muslim fundamentalists against the introduction of NCERT syllabus in educational institutions in the State created practical dilemma for the policy-making body in the education department. Jamat-i-Islami and Tableegul Islam were credited with a success after the Farooq government did not hesitate to oblige them by prescribing a book on history meant for 6th standard in schools covered under the NCERT syllabus. The banning of the book, which allegedly contained derogatory reference to Islam, had further encouraged a section of the Muslim fundamentalists to demand withdrawal of NCERT syllabus itself.

During G.M. Sadiq's tenure as Chief Minister the Muslim militants had whipped up popular sentiments against a famous printed document titled "Book of Knowledge" which allegedly contained some anti-Islamic material. Demonstrations were

organised against the existence in Kashmir of the book. Gripped by religious frenzy, demonstrators had attacked foreign tourists in skimpy clothes and a stinging treatment was given to a few European women—nettle was rubbed on their exposed legs. At the boulevard of the Dal Lake in Srinagar, a foreign tourist was compelled to shout "ban Book of Knowledge". But the ingenious foreigner shouted with unconcealed sarcasm "ban all books of knowledge". The Sadiq government soon proscribed the book and also unconditionally released those arrested for violence during the agitation.

After Sheikh Abdullah's return to power in 1975, Muslim fundamentalists succeeded in removing several books from educational institutions and reference libraries. These books included studies on Darwin's theory of evolution, A Short History of the World by H.G. Wells and Monuments of Civilisation. The last mentioned book contained a pencil sketch of the Prophet and this sparked off angry demonstrations, starting from the Kashmir University, and resulting in a series of violent incidents. Jamat-i-Islami was then accused of having incited the agitation, but the charge was stoutly denied by party president, Saduddin, who asserted that it was his party's intervention that had saved the situation. However, a section of Kashmir University students later complained to the then Governor, B.K. Nehru, that the party and its youth wing, Jamait-i-Tulba, were injecting communalism into campus life. It was alleged that followers of these organisations had tried to build a mosque on the campus and also sought closure of the unique Central Asian Museum.

The campaign against the museum was started after the museum claimed to have identified a figure on the coloured tiles of the building to be that of saint-philosopher, Syed Mohammed Madani Ali Kashmiri. Popularly known as Madin Saheb, the saint came to Kashmir in the 15th century from central Asia. He and his son were buried near a mosque at Zadibal on the outskirts of Srinagar. The museum survived the closure campaign thanks to stiff opposition from many influential Kashmiri Muslims, including Sheikh Abdullah. Interestingly, in view of the attitude of the fundamentalists, booksellers in the State began to ensure that the books they put

on sale were non-controversial. A leading bookseller in Srinagar had to engage an experienced Muslim teacher to go through several books on Islam before he put them on sale. Similarly, many librarians had voluntarily removed such books and periodicals that could provoke the irascibility of fundamentalists.

Even after the formation of the Congress(I)-backed government headed by G.M. Shah a serious development had taken place with the high-pitched cry for Islamic order in the Muslim-majority Kashmir. The cry and unhindered actions by a section of the Muslims to communalise the situation perturbed most of the Hindus, particularly those residing in villages. And although the authorities in Srinagar and Delhi reaffirmed their resolve to stamp out the evil of communal politics, the growth in the activity of Islamic fundamentalists in towns and villages of Kashmir had become a reality with a phenomenal increase in the number of protagonists of Islamic order in a decade. The decade that was : June 1975 to June 1985. With the removal of Congressmen from power in February 1975, hundreds of Muslim fanatics got an opportunity to intensify behind-the-scene efforts to educate their co-religionists in towns and villages on the need for the preservation of Muslim character of Kashmir.

Even Sheikh Abdullah, after his installation as the Chief Minister in 1975, was found encouraging actions designed, as they were, to unite Muslims and to increase the number of Islamic institutions, including mosques, not only in the two capital cities of Srinagar and Jammu but also elsewhere in the State. The Sheikh called himself a secularist. And yet he always advocated the need for the preservation of Muslim character of Kashmir. True, as the ruler of Kashmir for over seven years, he did not allow his opponents belonging to the Muslim-dominated groups to grow. But these opponents belonging to the right-wing Jamat-i-Islami, Jamait-i-Tulba, People's League, Mahzi Azadi and People's Conference were not prevented from open and secret attempts to strengthen and widen Islamic centres.

New Delhi had been apprised of the Sheikh's unwillingness to knock out those Muslims who had engaged themselves in

activities seeking establishment of more and more Islamic institutions, particularly mosques, in Kashmir. But the ruling party at Delhi could not assert itself simply because of the Sheikh's capacity to whip up passions of his co-religionists. Curious, indeed, was the oft-repeated statements by senior Congress(I) leaders describing the Sheikh, after his death in September 1982, as "a secularist" and "highly progressive in outlook". Equally curious was the statement by the leader of the State Congress(I) Legislature party, Maulvi Iftikhar Hussain Ansari, describing the Sheikh as "a communal politician sympathetic to Islamic fundamentalism". Less than a month before the Sheikh's death, Sheikh Tazamul Islam, President of the Jamait-i-Tulba, said that his party was being reorganised to bring about an Islamic revolution in Kashmir. In an interview published in "Arabia", a journal published from London, Tajamul mentioned that, as part of the programme, students and youths were being trained and drilled for achieving "our goal of establishing an Islamic government in Kashmir".

About a year after the Sheikh's death, Jamait-i-Tulba and People's League voiced the demand for acquiring arms for their workers and supporters. What for? Just to prevent "Hindu chauvinists" from attempts at doing away with the distinct identity of the Kashmiri Muslims. Before its merger with the Mahzi Azadi, the Muslim League had asked the Muslim youth to join "jihad" against secularism and for Islamic fundamentalism in Kashmir. The message was contained in a booklet in Urdu language circulated in Srinagar and elsewhere in the State. The 32-page booklet urged the Kashmiri Muslims to "prevent daughters of nation (Kashmiri nation) from moving around half-naked in educational institutions, offices, shops and public parks, to force closure of cinema houses and liquor shops, to eliminate narcotics like hashish which have fouled atmosphere in cities and towns and to revive your Islamic identity". The booklet blamed outsiders (apparently meaning Indians) for attempts to "annihilate" Muslim religion and called upon Kashmiris to initiate a "struggle" against them.

Happily for Jamat-i-Islami and Jamait-i-Tulba, a number of their supporters have emerged in government departments,

private and public sector undertakings, educational institutions and trade and commercial establishments not only in the Kashmir Valley but also in parts of Jammu and Ladakh regions. Despite its influence over a small section of the Muslim population, Awami Action Committee with Maulvi Farooq as its founder-President, is against attempts seeking Kashmir's permanent link with the Indian Union. "I am the Mirwaiz (head Muslim priest) of Kashmir and, as such, none in the world can prevent me from preaching Islam in my homeland", Maulvi Farooq asserted while talking to S.R. Ramanujan, executive editor of Newstime of Hyderabad, in May 1985. He also asserted that Indian leaders "cannot expect me to give up my programme for preservation of Kashmir's Muslim character".

Muslim organisations in Kashmir may violently differ with one another on many issues. But they are united on the question of making Kashmir an exclusive territory for Muslims alone. Significantly, scores of these activists have not hesitated to provide safety cover to a number of Muslim fundamentalists (from outside) who have, since mid-seventies, descended on Kashmir in twos and threes to preach Islam and consolidate local Muslims in towns and villages, including border areas. These non-Kashmiri fundamentalists are said to be hailing from parts of Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar. In the beginning of 1985, a bitter controversy was kicked up with some Hindu-dominated political and religious groups in the Jammu region opposed to the Shah government's encouragement to attempts by dozens of Muslim employees of official and semi-official undertakings and departments at setting up of mosques in "protected" areas. Local Hindu politicians and religious leaders did not oppose the continuance of religious freedom enjoyed by Muslims. But what agitated many Hindus in Jammu was the encouragement by the Shah regime to attempts to construct mosques within the premises of some government departments.

Adversaries of these attempts accused Shah of being the principal character, apparently interested in making available moral support to those who wanted the construction of mosques even within the "protected" areas. Shah was also accused of having tried to carve out for himself places of worship within

the "protected" secretariat premises in Jammu and Srinagar. But his move, in this connection, had boomeranged with the restoration of the mosque to a temple located in the secretariat premises in the capital city of Jammu. Shah had, evidently, hit upon his plan after he was subjected to public wrath at some Muslim congregations in the State since he came to power in July 1984. He was ridiculed by some Muslims at a religious gathering in the polo grounds in Srinagar in 1985. Later he also faced an awkward situation in the Jama masjid in Jammu when he was reported to have slapped a Muslim after the latter objected to the former's bid to convert the congregation into a political forum. It was under a frightful experience that Shah sought to create "safe" places of worship for himself.

Absence of a strong leadership in the strategically-important region of Jammu was, even by the end of 1985, too obvious to be missed, the existence of scores of politicians, young and old, notwithstanding. Failure of these politicians to establish a strong leadership in their homeland had led to a situation loaded, as it was, with the pronounced accent against the Kashmiri "domination". In other words, the political gulf between Jammu and the Muslim-majority Kashmir Valley had become as wide as the cultural and geographical gulf between them. Numerous, indeed, are the Hindu leaders and activists of the political groups, such as Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), Janata Party, Panther's Party, R.S.S. and Shiv Sena, who want to get rid of the Kashmiri "domination". But they cannot expect tension-free atmosphere in the context of the existence of a good number of Muslims in the Jammu region, who have already expressed themselves as strong supporters of their co-religionists residing in the Kashmir Valley and in the politically-important districts of Poonch, Rajouri and Doda.

The fact that the Jammu region as a whole has Hindu majority is unquestionable. But it does not provide a free hand to the antagonists of the Kashmiri "domination". Of the total six districts in the region, three districts—Poonch, Rajouri and Doda—have Muslim majority. This has created a measure of uneasiness among the Hindu circles in the remaining three districts—Jammu, Udhampur and Kathua. True, there is no dearth of Muslims in the Jammu region who are for the State's

accession with India. But most of the Muslims in the region are not ready to support the BJP and other Hindu-dominated political groups in their efforts designed, as they are, to build a strong Hindu leadership in Jammu as an answer to the Kashmiri "domination". According to the sample survey conducted by the two Indian intelligence outfits—IB and RAW—almost all the Muslims inhabiting the six districts of the Jammu region "have, over the years, been well educated on the need to maintain their links with the Kashmiri Muslims and to avoid encouraging those who want consolidation of Hindus before posing a threat to the Muslim leadership to Kashmir".

No wonder, therefore, when, in 1985, Kashmir's minister for information and geology and mining, Rafiq Hussain Khan, was placed under surveillance by an Indian intelligence agency. The unexpected phenomenon, it was pointed out, had been the product of unfettered reports about his "passion" for a further rise in influence and authority of his co-religionists within and outside the administrative set-up in Jammu and Kashmir. Khan's fight for their cause has not been without difficulties. Yet he had manipulated to outwit his Chief Minister, G.M. Shah, despite the latter's advice to him to be careful while dealing with a sensitive issue like posting and transfer of some non-Muslims working in the departments under his (Khan's) control. The minister for information, known to many as "maulvi" Rafiq Hussain, also manipulated to take an edge over Shah's wife, Khalida, and son, Muzaffar Shah, after they had favoured promotion of a couple of non-Muslim officials of information and stationery and supplies departments.

Instead of encouraging healthy trends the information minister insisted on the need to ensure a further rise in influence and authority of his co-religionists. It was apparently in this context that he chose a Muslim official of the information department to act as his "adviser" on how to ensure better working relations between the government and mediamen on the one hand and, on the other, tone up functioning of the State-run publicity wings. Both of them had, however, failed to accomplish their target by the time I had begun giving final touches to this chapter of the book towards the end of January 1986.

The problem of the organisation of a region is that of the relationship between its subjects and the administrative apparatus. While the political and administrative set-up in Jammu and Kashmir after the link between the State and the Indian Union was brought about in 1947 proved conducive to the regional tensions, the governmental changeovers between 1953 and July 1984 did not much help to remove these tensions. Secessionist sentiment in Kashmir Valley has been fed by the communalism in Jammu which in turn is provoked by the fears aroused by the secessionists. In the course of an informal chat with me in Jammu in July 1985, Ved Bhasin, editor and proprietor of the widely-circulated English daily, Kashmir Times, ridiculed all those Hindu leaders of the Jammu region who had failed to realise the importance of the Muslim factor which had become an open secret with the majority of Muslims in the districts of Poonch, Rajouri and Doda. Considered to be more conversant with the ebb and flow in his homeland than many political stalwarts, Bhasin was firm in his opinion: "That Muslims inhabiting parts of the Jammu region have, over the years, become important can be explained by the manner in which an overwhelming majority of them continued to resist attempts by Hindu-dominated political groups in the region to do away with the Kashmiri domination."

Muslims' resistance to such type of attempts, Bhasin pointed out, was the outcome of the late Sheikh Abdullah's open support to efforts designed, as they were, to galvanise Muslims, to increase the number of Islamic centres including mosques, to fight for representation of Muslims in services, and to make them realise the growing importance of their district identity. The irony of the situation, as it obtained during the Sheikh's regime, was that he did not consider himself to be leader of the Hindus of Jammu. Neither the Sheikh nor other Muslim politicians objected to the spread of idea reiterating that the Muslims constituting a majority in the districts of Doda, Poonch and Rajouri would not like to be bracketed with the Dogra Hindus and would prefer to stay with the Muslims of Kashmir Valley in case of reorganisation of the State.

Muslims of Jammu, at least 20 per cent of them, do not consider leaders of the parties like BJP, Janata Party and other

Hindu groups as their defenders, for most of the Muslims continue to smart under the impression that these groups looked interested in attempts at strengthening and widening the Hindu society. The impression has a basis when taken into account the unambiguous involvement of an average Kashmiri Muslim in the task of preserving the Muslim character of Kashmir. Even political personalities like Dr. Karan Singh and Congress(I) stalwarts—Trilochan Dutta, and two members of the Indian Parliament, G.L. Dogra and Janak Raj Gupta—are not acceptable to the bulk of the Muslim population in the region. Dr. Karan Singh, though enjoying more respect than other Hindu leaders, has been criticised by many Muslims for his sectarian views : The pro-Rajput sentiment. While Dutta has, for one reason or another, proved himself to be more interested in the expansion of his commercial establishments, Dogra and Janak Raj have not found the majority of Muslims receptive to the “secular” politics and programmes defined by their Congress(I) party from time to time.

Devi Das Thakur, who was appointed as the Deputy Chief Minister by G.M. Shah, has been found tactical in his approach: His occasional reference to needs and difficulties of people residing in the backward districts of Doda, Rajouri and Poonch is apparently part of the Shah government's plan to keep the Muslim population there in a good humour. But Thakur, too, is not acceptable to the majority of the population in the entire Jammu region. After becoming the Deputy Chief Minister, Thakur did favour the question of making available some constitutional provisions to ensure equitable distribution of benefits among the three regions of the State—Jammu, Ladakh and Kashmir Valley. His plea for a new constitutional arrangement flowed from his assessment : “There is a feeling of distrust in the three regions of the State and, as such, a system has to be evolved to help remove irritations and misunderstanding”. The Jammu region has a number of politicians, each trying to take an edge over the other. A strong leadership in the region is the best guarantee of the unity of Jammu and Kashmir. It is only after a strong leadership is established in Jammu that its people would not only maintain their dignity but would also be able to strengthen their relations with the people of Kashmir.

The known political groups in the region—BJP, Janata Party and Congress(I)—are not strong enough to help strengthen relations between Jammu and Kashmir Valley. And in spite of his assertion that “further exploitation” of the people of Jammu region would not be tolerated. Dr. Karan Singh has failed to muster the required strength for organising expression and activity against what he describes as “continuance of Kashmiri domination on political and administrative spheres” in the State. His unwillingness to mix up, frequently, with all sorts of people has, to say precisely, been responsible for his hold only on a particular section of the population—Rajputs of higher category. There are many more, especially Muslims and Harijans. Without their support and sympathy the former Maharaja (Karan Singh) as well other politicians cannot be able to assert themselves on the political plane in Jammu.

Like their co-religionists in the Kashmir Valley, Muslims of the Jammu region are for the preservation of special status guaranteed under Article 370 of the Indian Constitution. The intensity of the Muslims' feeling on Article 370 would leave none in doubt about their determination to preserve the State's special position guaranteed by the Constitution. Most of the Muslims believe that the Article constitutes a solemn pledge by the Centre to uphold the State's autonomy. While the State's accession to India in 1947 removed the apprehension of the non-Muslim majority in Jammu and Kashmir, the incorporation of Article 370 in the Constitution of India was evidently meant to allay fears of the Muslim majority by providing internal autonomy for the State. Nothing should, therefore, be done to interfere with the provisions of Article 370. Abrogation of the Article might produce a situation in the State similar to one which preceded and followed the fall of Sheikh Abdullah's government in August 1953.

Anti-Delhi Drive

A Japanese tape recorder was used to monitor G.M. Shah's utterances at a function in Srinagar on 5 December 1985. The occasion was the outcome of a week-long exercise by the Shah camp to commemorate Sheikh Abdullah's 80th birth anniversary. The Intelligence Bureau engaged one of its sleuths who, after obtaining the imported tape recorder, quietly mixed up with a group of the ruling National Conference workers before Shah spoke at the function. The IB sleuth remained unexposed and did not experience any difficulty while handling his tape recorder. Need for the Japanese tape recorder was felt after the Kashmir wing of Intelligence Bureau was informed about Shah's plan to rake up certain controversial issues. IB's senior echelons did not ignore this piece of information after they were told about yet another significant development: The ruling party leadership's decision against inviting all newsmen to the function.

The Chief Minister, G.M. Shah, took a high tone as he recalled the events which, in 1953, resulted in the dismissal and detention of his father-in-law, Sheikh Abdullah. An official handout issued by the State-run information department did not make any mention of Shah's utterances on the 1953 episode. Shah brought hornets' nest about his ears after "Kashmir Times", a widely-circulated English daily of Jammu, splashed on its front page an item accusing him of having described India's former Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, and other Central leaders as "dishonest" while handling the then Premier of Kashmir, Sheikh Abdullah, until the latter's ouster from power

on 9 August 1953. The function in Srinagar was organised as part of the programme to commemorate the late Sheikh's birth anniversary in different areas of the State. But Shah chose to recall the 1953 episode even when there was no visible provocation for him to do so. He was found undismayed even after the State Congress (I) Legislature party leader, Maulvi Iftikhar, urged New Delhi to take a serious note of the manner in which Shah had sought to "distort" the governmental changeover in 1953.

Shah did not oblige Maulvi Iftikhar by tendering an apology. Nor did the Chief Minister disown the item published by the "Kashmir Times". Interestingly, Shah's trusted revenue minister, Ghulam Nabi Kochak, made a desperate attempt on 7 December to set at rest the controversy which had been triggered off as a result of certain remarks made by the former against Delhi's party in power in 1953. Kochak's statement found a wide circulation, with the help of the information department, not only the vicinity of Jammu but also in the capital city of Srinagar. Kochak had made an attempt to calm down indignant Congressmen. Even the Deputy Chief Minister, Devi Das Thakur, was found trying to mollify some embittered Congressmen. But the Congress party's indignation was aggravated by Kochak's statement which, curiously, proclaimed: "It is extremely unfortunate that Iftikhar Hussain Ansari has fallen into the trap of the editor of Kashmir Times and chosen to make a statement without verifying the facts and without even contacting the Chief Minister."

The statement had surfaced barely a day after the Indian minister of state for internal security, Arun Nehru, called for the taped speech of Shah. Maulvi Iftikhar also talked to Nehru after the IB's tape was quietly sent to Delhi's North Block. Iftikhar could not expect Nehru to announce Delhi's line of action at a time when the Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, sat with the heads of government of six other countries on the decorated rostrum of Sangsad Bhavan in Dhaka, Bangladesh. While paying rich tributes to his father-in-law on his birth anniversary, G.M. Shah did not hesitate to justify the departed leader's uncompromising posture in 1953 when, according to him, intention of Jawaharlal Nehru and others in Delhi "had started

becoming doubtful with regard to Article 370 of the Indian Constitution" granting a special status to Kashmir. Shah, for reasons best known to him, sought to hold the stick from a different end as he told his audience on 5 December that the Sheikh's advocacy for the retention of Article 370 had resulted in the confrontation with Delhi in 1953.

Shah's utterances on the subject came after a startling revelation: Shah's success in obtaining a copy of the late Sheikh Abdullah's autobiography. The known custodian of the departed Kashmir leader's reminiscences, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, could not get the slightest hint regarding behind-the-scene efforts made by Shah until the latter succeeded in obtaining a copy. Even the late Sheikh's widow, Begum Akbar Jehan, was kept in the dark. Shah's plan remained inexplicable. It was, however, believed that Shah, if left high and dry the powers that be in Delhi, might rake up certain controversial points purported to have been highlighted by the late Sheikh in his autobiography. In his hitherto unpublished autobiography, Sheikh Abdullah had disclosed that Pakistan's first Governor-General, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, was not willing to recognise the "distinct personality" of Kashmir. Jinnah had wanted to "subjugate us with force and that was the reason why I offered unflinching resistance to the Pakistani invasion of Jammu and Kashmir in 1947", the Sheikh pointed out. The late Kashmir leader had feelingly spoken of his intense desire to ensure and preserve the freedom of Jammu and Kashmir and not allow it to be turned into "colony" of India or Pakistan. This desire, according to him, made him stand and resist Jinnah and Jawaharlal Nehru since "both wanted to suppress and subjugate us".

The 200-page autobiography which conveyed the Sheikh's assessment on men and matters in and outside the Kashmir State was reportedly critical of Jawaharlal Nehru. "I quarrelled with Nehru in 1953 for the same reason for which I fought Jinnah in 1947", the Sheikh said, adding that Nehru, too, tried to "suppress Kashmiris with force". The autobiography, however, described Nehru as a "basically cultured person and a good friend", but claimed that his political role was Machiavellian. The Sheikh referred in some detail to his concept of the Kashmiri identity. "We must have a distinct place in India

with only three subjects—defence, foreign affairs and communication—to be handled by the Centre", the Sheikh was said to have asserted in his autobiography. The departed leader believed that the Kashmiris' freedom movement had not reached its destination and charged that New Delhi had made promises but kept none.

Whatever the assessment of G.M. Shah on the situation as it obtained before August 1953, there was no doubt that his father-in-law became unpopular among the Muslim masses in Kashmir when, after his installation as the State's Premier in 1948, he assumed sweeping powers and, more often than not, acted in a manner as to embarrass Nehru and his government. As the arrangement between New Delhi and the Sheikh had proved unworkable and led to the unnecessary conflict in the operations of the two sides, Jawaharlal Nehru became keen to sort out differences with his ally (Sheikh Abdullah) and seek a solution. He moved in the matter and convinced the Sheikh on the need for a dialogue between the two sides. It was against this background that the representatives of the two sides met in Delhi. Discussions between the two sides eventually resulted in the emergence of a significant development: An agreement, known as Delhi Agreement, was finalised on 14 July 1952. Ink on the agreement had hardly dried up when the unpredictable Sheikh started giving expression to ideas which contradicted the views he had earlier voiced in support of the State's accession to India.

G.M. Shah himself had sided with his father-in-law when he made an unexpected volte face and played foul with India in the course of his forthright but imprudent utterances on more than one occasion. Jawaharlal Nehru made an attempt to counsel the Sheikh and prevent him from making fast and furious expression on the Kashmir problem and on the future of the people of the State. Even, at one stage in July 1953, Nehru cautioned the Kashmir leader against the dangers stored in the situation. But the Sheikh declined Nehru's offer for talks to resolve differences between the two sides. Disappointed by the Sheikh's stand, Nehru did not prevent the anti-Abdullah lobby from devising means to deal with the Kashmir leader. The Sheikh's dismissal on 8 August was followed by his arrest

and imprisonment on 9 August 1953.

G.M. Shah tried to distort yet another reality by claiming that, after the late Prime Minister, Mrs. Gandhi, understood that "New Delhi was at fault and that it was not right to confront the Sheikh", a new chapter was opened with the finalisation of the famous arrangement between her and "Lion of Kashmir" in February 1975. The Sheikh had hunger for power and, as such, did not lag behind. Indeed, after the 1971 war between India and Pakistan, he was found in search of instruments that could enable him to capture the coveted office of Chief Minister in Kashmir. Curiously, his son-in-law, Shah, tried to prove—and that too on 5 December 1985—that he was not afraid of the Delhi-backed Congress party in Kashmir when he justified a thing of the past: Sheikh Abdullah's confrontation with New Delhi during and after 1953. The Shah government survived because of the Congress (I) support to it. Even then Shah embarrassed the local Congress leadership by his allegation that some Congress MLAs were bribed by Dr. Farooq Abdullah to vote against their party candidate, Tirth Ram Amla, in the December biennial election to fill one Rajya Sabha seat from Jammu and Kashmir.

The Congress (I) party's anger against Shah became amply clear with Maulvi Iftikhar's statement berating him for his "highly irrelevant, baseless and uncalled for remarks against the late Nehru". Another event which led New Delhi to doubt Shah's bona fides had taken place in Kashmir earlier in October. Nazir Ahmed Geelani, an activist of the UK-based Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, had quite a kick days before his unceremonious deportation from Srinagar. Like the deuce he had ensured his unauthorised entry into Kashmir on 18 October. At least for 24 days, after his unexpected entry into his ancestral home at Khadanyar in the Baramulla district of Kashmir, he enjoyed unbridled freedom. Even then he was found quite cautious in his dealings with a set of Kashmiris he came across in and outside his Khadanyar dwelling.

That Nazir Geelani had not wanted even his father to ask unnecessary questions became evident as the latter told a team of the State CID officials on 11 November: "I did not blow

trumpet after my son wanted me to see him tension-free during his stay in Kashmir." Within hours of his arrival in his ancestral house Geelani had made inquiries about his first wife who was left in the lurch when, in 1973, he crossed into the Pakistan-held territory, known as "Azad Kashmir". For an hour or so he was set thinking anew when his father reminded him of a letter the former had sent in over five years ago in which he had announced his decision separating himself from his wife. Geelani's desire for a fresh matrimonial alliance with his first wife created moments of anxiety for his father. The problem was, however, solved after Geelani's father consulted a couple of the Muslim priests in the vicinity of Khadanyar. A reunion between Geelani and his wife, Mehbooba, was brought about by 19 October when, late evening that day, a feast was quietly arranged to satisfy the UK-based visitor and his daughter who was born three months after her father (Geelani) fled to the other side of the border.

Both Mehbooba and her daughter had a reason to look buoyant in their optimism with Geelani's reported announcement: "I have come here to prepare travel documents to enable both of you to go abroad." Their joy, however, did not last long. On 10 November, a party of policemen encircled the village house at Khadanyar and lifted Nazir Geelani for interrogation. His arrest was effected after the government of India had berated the State authorities for their "failure" to deal with illegal crossings into Kashmir. Geelani's travel documents had authorised his visit only up to Delhi after his arrival there from London on 17 October. After he landed at the Palam Airport (Delhi) he did not allow anybody to strike fear into him. "Indeed, during my one-day stay in the Indian capital, I acted in a manner as to prevent the intelligence sleuths from keeping a watch on me", he disclosed during his interrogation in Srinagar. He concealed his Pakistani passport (AJ 477153) in his imported attache case immediately after he was allotted a room in a hotel near South Extension in New Delhi. While buying an air ticket for Srinagar from the Indian Airlines office in Delhi he described himself as an "Indian national" belonging to Kashmir. "I presented myself as a bonafide resident of Kashmir when an official of the

Indian Airlines casually asked me if I had been to Delhi to promote the sale of Kashmiri handicrafts", he said and added: "As I did not want to get myself exposed, I was left with no alternative but to mislead the official by telling him that I came here to deliver a consignment of almonds and walnuts to a local businessman in Chandni Chowk."

"Even my friend, Verma Saheb, a former liaison officer of the international committee of Red Cross, was not taken into confidence by me when on 17 October he wanted me to disclose my itinerary for next few days in the Indian capital", he revealed. Yet another revelation made by Geelani prompted two Indian officials, one each from the Intelligence Bureau and intelligence wing of the Border Security Force, to call for sustained investigations as he had quietly informed Prof. Saif-ud-Din Soz (of the opposition National Conference), a member of the Indian Lok Sabha, about his decision to visit Kashmir. "In Kashmir, I wanted to meet Dr. Farooq Abdullah also. But in deference to Prof. Soz's desire I avoided trying for a session with the former Chief Minister", Geelani said and added: "I also avoided coming into contact with other prominent leaders of the Farooq camp after I was told in Delhi by Prof. Soz that my meeting with any one of them could stir up host of enemies against Dr. Abdullah." The two intelligence officials told me in Srinagar that Nazir Geelani sprang a surprise when, in the course of questioning in an interrogation centre, he cited certain instances to prove himself as a friendly contact of at least three functionaries of the Indian High Commission in London.

Kashi Nath Kuda, as revealed by Geelani, was quite helpful and affable until his return to India. "I kept myself in constant touch with Kuda in London before and after the assassination of Indian diplomat, Ravindra Mhatre. After I knew about the association of KNK (Kashi Nath Kuda) with India's premier intelligence outfit (RAW), I developed personal friendship with him and, much against the wishes of the extremist faction of the UK-based JKLF. I kept KNK informed about the activities of the militant JKLF leader, Amanullah Khan", Geelani divulged. His desire for a "quiet meeting" with KNK in Delhi remained unfulfilled after his (Geelani's) arrest

and subsequent deportation from Kashmir on 18 November. Geelani was not prepared to be described as an "informant" of Kuda until the latter's stay in London, when a State CID official reportedly asked: "Did you receive cash payments from Kuda for your reports furnished to him from time to time?" "I wish to inform you that as director of community relations (Asia) I earn Rs. 32,000 a month from the UK government and, as such, I did not require KNK's material support", quick came the reply from Geelani. Kuda and other functionaries of the Indian High Commission in London "did not hesitate to thank me and my colleagues when we provided important clues which eventually led to the arrest of three activists who were later awarded life imprisonment for Mhatre's murder", he said.

The three convicts, according to Geelani, had been enrolled by Amanullah Khan before he (Khan) masterminded the kidnapping and subsequent annihilation of Mhatre. "I am no longer a supporter of Amanullah, although he had helped me a lot when I left Pakistan some years ago for London in the search of a job", he said, adding that he continued to be associated with a breakaway wing of the UK-based JKLF, headed by Abdul Jabbar Bhat. How did he arrange grant of visa to enable him to undertake a trip from London to Delhi? "I feel my friendly relations with some office-bearers of the Indian High Commission in London enabled me to establish my bona fides as their dependable contact. The development helped me to obtain visa without any difficulty", he told his investigators. Soon after his arrival at the Srinagar airport on 18 October he hired a taxicab on his way to Khadanyar.

"I had carried with me 6,500 dollars and, as such, I did not hesitate to spend lavishly wherever I went during my stay in Kashmir", Geelani said. His interesting revelation: "I had a reason to keep myself away from the banking institutions in and around Srinagar after I was, without any difficulty and condition, helped in getting the American dollar exchanged for Indian rupee through private parties in Kashmir." He identified three such parties who dealt in the clandestine trade. Geelani had sought to bribe a local policeman when he called

for the scrutiny of his travel documents. But he could not accomplish his target : To prolong his stay in Kashmir with the official connivance. In a deuced hurry he approached his old friend, Muzaffar Hussain Beg, the State's advocate-general, for his assistance. "I am really grateful to him for his help which, in the first place, led the State Chief Minister, G.M. Shah, to be sympathetic to me and, secondly, rendered the State CID personnel somewhat ineffective after I was given a copy of the letter with a recommendation to the government of India that my entry into Kashmir be regularised and I am permitted to stay in the State for five weeks", he said while answering questions by his investigators.

The recommendation was made by Kashmir's home secretary to the Indian home secretary. It, however, boomeranged on the local government. Shah was found upset after New Delhi took a serious note of his government's sympathetic attitude towards the JKLF intruder into Kashmir. The State's advocate-general, too, was disturbed after Shah was said to have sharply protested against the manner in which the former misguided him before the government of India was approached with the recommendation in favour of Geelani. An official statement, issued in Jammu and Srinagar, denied a report that intruder Geelani had met Shah. It claimed that, after his arrival in Srinagar, Geelani had represented to "competent authority for permission to stay in the State for five weeks". Intriguingly, the statement quoted the intruder as having said that his visit to Kashmir had been "prompted by receipt of information by him regarding sudden and serious illness of his father in the Baramulla district". This curious justification of intrusion, as explained by the Kashmir wing of Intelligence Bureau, ran contrary to the statement made by Geelani himself in the course of the week-long stay in the Srinagar interrogation centre. "I wanted to take my father and others in my native place (Khadanyar) by surprise when, soon after my arrival in Delhi, I purchased an air ticket for Srinagar. My father was not that bad when I hugged him with affection immediately after I filed into his residential premises", the JKLF activist reported.

If G.M. Shah had to answer some awkward questions raised

by Delhi, he was himself to blame. Shah's recommendation in favour of Geelani came as a surprise, if not shock, to those in Delhi who were accustomed to hearing him talk against unauthorised intrusions into Jammu and Kashmir. Geelani had, during his stay at Khadanyar, desired to meet Ghulam Nabi, a resident of the border area of Uri, who had facilitated the former's journey across the line of actual control in May 1973. Ghulam Nabi could not be located. A message was left in Uri with one of his friend's about Geelani's arrival in Khadanyar. But Ghulam Nabi did not turn up, apparently because of the unabated anger of Geelani's father against the manner in which he had obtained a sum of Rs. 1,000 "from my son before conducting him across the border, into Pakistan held territory". Ghulam Nabi who, in 1973, was known to be working as an "informer" of the IB and the BSF intelligence wing did not return the entire amount to Geelani's father even when he (Ghulam Nabi) was beaten up by a CID official, Abdul Majid Lone, after his reported confession : "I obtained Rs. 1,000 from Nazir Geelani before I enabled him to go across the border."

About two months before Nazir Geelani's unauthorised entry into Kashmir, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) uncovered a secret plan designed, as it was, to create disorder and blow up some vital installations and bridges in Kashmir. Discovery of the hit-and-run scheme followed the seizure of a bunch of letters mailed to Srinagar from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the USA and Britain. These letters and cyclostyled handouts, 15 in all, were dramatically intercepted when a handful of employees of the Posts and Telegraphs department opened two bags in the sorting section of the general post office (GPO) in Srinagar. The raid took place after two unidentified employees of P & T had, on one occasion in July, undertaken sorting of the mail after the office hours inside the Srinagar GPO without the knowledge of their superiors. It was done in the presence of three Muslim youths who, according to a guardsman posted to the GPO, went away with some envelopes taken out of the two mail-bags in the wake of hurried sorting around 11.30 in the night. Next morning the matter was reported to the higher-ups in the department. But the lack of sufficient evidence went

in favour of the two employees, although orders were quietly issued transferring both of them to another section.

A letter sent in by Sahebzada Yaqub, President of Jamat-i-Islami in Pakistani "Azad Kashmir", preached violence and urged activists of Kashmir's Islamic Students Organisation (ISO) to "take up arms against Kafirs (infidels) in Indian-held Kashmir". Activities of ISO were concentrated mostly on the Kashmir University campus. But quite a few of the ISO activists had, on more than one occasion, sought to create unrest even outside the campus. Sahebzada's letter called for a "concerted drive to unite the Kashmiri Muslims before launching *jihad* against Indian agents and Hindu chauvinists". Making a passing reference to the disclosure by Sardar Sikander Hayat, Prime Minister of "Azad Kashmir", that his government had allocated funds to be spent on "liberating Indian-held Kashmir". Sahebzada's letter also advocated the "need to organise Kashmiri Muslims for shaking up Indian agents and bases in Kashmir".

Another letter written by the UK-based JKLF leader, Amanullah Khan, called for "direct action by the Kashmiri patriots against Hindu occupation forces in Kashmir". "You should not withdraw from your battlefield", counselled Amanullah's letter which hinted at "availability of additional material aid for the Muslim fighters of Kashmir in near future". A letter purporting to come from Zuber Ansari of the London-based JKLF was equally loaded with anti-India and anti-Hindu accent. Use of some abbreviations by Zuber in his letter notwithstanding, two intelligence sleuths did not take long to decode terms like "HMMC" and "DB & VI"—"HMMC" meaning harass members of the minority community, while "DB&VI" implying destroy bridges and vital installations. Unidentified functionaries of the Postal Research Centre, operating under the administrative control of the RAW, played a significant part while decoding contents of three letters addressed to a couple of militants owing their allegiance to the pro-Pakistan Islamic Jamait-i-Tulba and People's League.

Spade work became necessary to reason out a solution to a set of peculiar abbreviations in two letters, one posted from Saudi Arabia and another from Rawalpindi. Abbreviations

like "STI" and "FHDTFT" were used by Ayub Thakur in his letter to one of his contacts in Srinagar. An ardent supporter of Islamic fundamentalism, Ayub Thakur served as a lecturer in an educational institution in Saudi Arabia. He went to Saudi Arabia after working in the Kashmir University till 1980. His letter made a startling revelation: "It was a pleasure for me to have met my old friend, STI, in Pakistan recently. He seemed deeply engrossed. Even then he was, as usual, down-to-earth practical minded when I managed to discuss with him some important issues concerning our co-religionists on either side of the Indo-Pak border." Ayub Thakur had let the cat out of the bag: "STI" abbreviation, as decoded by the intelligence sleuths, clearly pointed to the clandestine trip to Pakistan by Sheikh Tajamul Islam. Thakur's letter did not mention time and date of his meeting with "STI" (Sheikh Tajamul Islam) in Pakistan, although a passing reference was made to the "quiet" discussion between the two before Tajamul's "return" to Kashmir. The State authorities were not informed about the disclosure by Ayub Thakur.

Finding fault with the oft-repeated opinion by the State CID about Tajamul "hiding himself somewhere in Kashmir", the Indian intelligence agencies avoided involving the local police and CID personnel in the operations to track down Tajamul. Following his anti-India outbursts Sheikh Tajamul went underground in September 1984. Existence of contact through exchange of letters between a group of Kashmiris and the London-based JKLF is not unknown. As the means of communication have undergone a big change over the years, the problem of exercising an effective control over those in touch with one or more than one foreign sources is by no means easy. Equally uneasy is the problem to identify the nature of association between certain elements in Kashmir and foreign agencies beyond its borders. Indian intelligence agencies have not disputed reports about the flow of material aid into Kashmir from across the border. Ayub Thakur's letter containing the abbreviation "FHDTFT" (financial help dispatched through foreign travellers) incidentally bore testimony to the fact. The help, not for Indian agents.

Unexpected Events

The going was tough for Kashmir's minister for tourism, Mrs. Khem Lata Wakhloo. Her efforts to build up prestige of G.M. Shah's government notwithstanding, she was not taken seriously. Her image, which was lowered as a result of her defection from the camp led by Dr. Farooq Abdullah, could not improve, at least in the State's corridors of power. Chief Minister Shah and his mentors regarded her as an asset with the installation of government of "defectors" in the coup of 2 July 1984. But, with the passage of time, Mrs. Wakhloo found herself in an unenviable position. As a clever woman she feigned ignorance about the subtle activity of her adversaries within the ruling National Conference faction and council of ministers.

At the same time, however, she had failed to defeat those who had, for no fault of her's, begun to doubt her. Her adversaries also included two ministers in the State who, for reasons best known to them, had been found drawing vicarious pleasure by calling her an "agent" of the ruling Congress (I) party in New Delhi. Mrs. Wakhloo was, perhaps, unaware of the fact that these two ministers had, without any fanfare, enrolled themselves as "informers" of an Indian intelligence agency in Kashmir when they and many others had joined Sheikh Abdullah in his battle against Delhi between 1953 and 1974. One of the ministers, as reported officially, did not hesitate to ask for a rise in his monthly remuneration from the Kashmir wing of Intelligence Bureau during the agitation over the disappearance

of the Prophet's sacred relic from the Hazratbal shrine on the outskirts of Srinagar towards the end of 1963.

Mrs. Wakhloo could not take up arms against her critics inside the party in power, simply because of her being an ambitious woman in the first place and, secondly, of her existence in the State Legislative Assembly as a nominated member with no right to vote. She is a politician-turned writer. Indeed, she has been since she attained majority, dividing her time between politics and writing of novels one of which was awarded a prestigious prize by the State-run academy of art, culture and languages. Married to the principal of the regional engineering college in Srinagar, Dr. O.N. Wakhloo, she made her debut in active politics in 1977 when she contested election for the Legislative Assembly but lost. She did not give up her fight.

And as time passed she joined the National Conference headed by Dr. Farooq Abdullah. She was nominated as an MLA in 1983. Initially devoted to Dr. Abdullah, Mrs. Wakhloo, like all other political weather-cocks, deserted him and joined the ranks of his arch political foe, Shah. No principles were involved. It was simply because of Dr. Abdullah's "sin" of appointing a committee for selection of candidates for admission in the regional engineering college—a task which her husband had monopolised. Infuriated Mrs. Wakhloo shifted her loyalties. Another nominated MLA, Mrs. Gurbachan Kumari Rana, also deserted Dr. Abdullah before her entry into the Shah ministry. Mrs. Rana's inferiority to Mrs. Wakhloo could be explained by the latter's better academic career and more attractive personality than the former. Even then Mrs. Rana was found more assertive than Mrs. Wakhloo: The former, unlike the latter, made her presence felt with her warning to the housing minister, Ghulam Mohammed Bhaderwahi, to stop interfering in her working as the minister for excise and taxation "or else face serious consequences".

Mrs. Wakhloo, too, had a grievance against the Deputy Chief Minister, Devi Das Thakur, for the latter's "unwarranted" interference in matters relating to the departments under her control. Instead of adopting a rigid posture towards Thakur, Mrs. Wakhloo put out feelers through a third party about her

intention to join his (Thakur's) foes within the ruling party in the State if he continued to poke his nose into the working of her departments. Thakur, like Mrs. Wakhloo, had also earned the sobriquet "Delhi's agent". As months rolled by after the coup of 2 July 1984, Thakur exposed himself too weak to resist the temptation of power and pelf. He might not have entertained any hope of G.M. Shah's continuance in office for long. But the fact that his importance had been substantially reduced could not be refuted. By the beginning of the year, 1986, Shah and his men were, undoubtedly, confronted with a dangerous situation following New Delhi's search for a better political arrangement than the Shah regime in Kashmir.

But Shah's unwillingness to accept Devi Das Thakur as the only source of strength for his government became evident when the latter took back his resignation within a few hours of submitting it to the former. Smarting under the impression that Shah owed his existence to him, Thakur reduced his tale to writing on 23 December 1985 when he sent his resignation letter to the Chief Minister. Thakur's resignation, which had highlighted his rift with Shah and most of the ministers, came at a time when the Congress (I)'s unwillingness to continue its support to the Shah regime had become too obvious to be missed. The resignation letter did create a breeze in the corridors of power with some ministers appearing, in the initial stage, quite restless. Even Shah himself was found somewhat disturbed soon after Thakur's letter was delivered to him. Thakur's step was taken well by Shah's adversaries in and outside the State administration. And as the unexpected resignation letter resulted in a wave of speculations with a number of people in the capital cities of Jammu and Srinagar curiously awaiting the government's fall, the Raj Bhavan was suddenly brought into focus on the night of 23 December with Governor Jagmohan's unpublicised instructions to his subordinate staff to be in a state of preparedness. This was done in the context of reports about the "subtle" plan drawn up by three ministers—Dr. Mehboob Beg, Jagjivan Lal and Talib Hussain—to desert the Shah camp.

Even the Indian Home Ministry was said to have alerted the Central leadership after the Intelligence Bureau's crash

message had predicted "a crisis for the Chief Minister Shah" with Thakur's resignation and "likelihood of three ministers joining the Deputy Chief Minister in his battle against Shah". The IB's hurried assessment had apparently been based on the reported statement by Thakur to a newspaper editor in Jammu about his (Thakur's) "final decision to quit the cabinet". Interestingly, some of the functionaries of the State Pradesh Congress Committee, who were about to leave for Delhi on their way to Bombay to attend the Congress centenary celebrations, delayed their departure after they were quietly told by their principals to "wait and watch". The Congress (I)'s directive urging the partymen to be on the watch was not without significance in the context of the party high command's apathy to Shah's attempt to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds.

The situation, however, assumed a new complexion altogether after Thakur was told that he could not upset the ruling party's apple-cart as he was not an elected member of the State Legislative Assembly. In the absence of support to him by the disgruntled ministers, the Deputy Chief Minister was left with no alternative but to withdraw his resignation within a few hours of submitting it to the Chief Minister. Before he retraced his steps Thakur had allowed himself to be persuaded by Shah. Ironically, Thakur proved himself weaker than the State's chief secretary, Mir Nassrullah, who allowed himself to be humiliated by Shah in Jammu in the presence of half a dozen ministers. G.M. Shah is known for his volatile nature. The flashes of temper and frequent tantrums were supposedly part of his style of functioning. And he had not mellowed with his age as Mir Nassrullah learnt to his dismay. Nassrullah aroused the ire of his boss over alleged irregularities in the induction of local officers into the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) cadre.

It all started when six ministers trooped into the Chief Minister's chamber, complaining that Nassrullah had kept them in the dark about the selection. All the bureaucrat's explanations would not convince Shah, who let loose a volley of expletives. "You get out of my room before I direct my orderlies to throw you out", Shah finally ordered. Nassrullah who was himself inducted into the IAS some years ago, had to swallow the insult. Interestingly, Shah and Nassrullah happen

to be sons-in-law of two great personalities, the late Sheikh Abdullah and Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, who in the latter part of their lives crossed swords with each other. The two leaders were ruthless when it came to dealing with each other in public. But there is not a single instance of their having indulged in such indecency at any time during their face-to-face private meetings. Equally interesting is the fact that Shah and Nassrullah survived on the barrowed glory of their fathers-in-law—Shah of the late Sheikh Abdullah and Nassrullah of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed.

Earlier, in the beginning of December, government of India was set thinking anew with the Shah government's reported decision to accept the validity of a "dubious" power of attorney and permit the sale of a valuable piece of evacuee land in Srinagar. Proposed sale was to be effected in the gross violation of the provisions of "Enemy Agents Act", providing for confiscation of evacuee property belonging to those who had "waged war against India". The plot of land, belonging to a former General of the Pakistan army, Iftikhar Ahmed, measured 41 kanals and was valued at around Rs. 5 crores. The plot of land has, since 1948, been under the possession of the custodian of evacuee property after its owner, Iftikhar, fled Srinagar and settled in Pakistan. In October 1985, a Pakistani national, identified as Mohammed Farooq, paid a brief visit to Kashmir in an apparent bid to deliver the power of attorney to a local business magnate of Srinagar.

Farooq, said to be the son of General (retired) Iftikhar, spent some time with the local businessman and Chief Minister Shah's son before returning to Pakistan. Farooq was married to the daughter of a rich businessman of Karachi, who originally resided in Kashmir. The businessman, identified as Noor Mohammed Pacha, was in Kashmir for some weeks in 1985. His return to Pakistan had followed his quiet meetings with a number of local VIPs, including some leaders of the Shah camp. Pacha also visited the plot of land, which during Sheikh Abdullah's regime, was earmarked for being converted into children's park at the instance of the then Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi.

More than a few eyebrows were raised with the circulation

of posters berating New Delhi for its "failure" to prevent the authorities in Pakistan and "Azad Kashmir" from implementing their decision granting proprietary rights to the refugees over lands and residential premises left behind by those who had fled that country and crossed into the Jammu region during the Indo-Pakistan war in 1947-48. Pakistan government's decision was first announced in May 1980 in Sialkot, across the Suchetgarh sector of Jammu, by the then President of "Azad Kashmir", Brigadier Mohammed Hayat Khan. New Delhi was said to have taken up the matter with Islamabad only after India's premier intelligence outfit, RAW, reported, towards the end of 1980, that the authorities in Pakistan and Pakistan-held Kashmir were keen on the implementation of their decision. And although the late Mrs. Gandhi's whirlwind tour of Jammu in April 1981 highlighted the plight of displaced persons residing on this side of the border, the issue as it developed with the announcement of Pakistan government's decision remained unresolved.

Mrs. Gandhi was unwilling, for obvious political reasons, to share with the refugees in Jammu the nature of steps her government had taken to set at rest the controversy stirred by Islamabad with its decision conferring proprietary rights on Muslim refugees in Pakistan and "Azad Kashmir". The exact number of displaced persons in the Jammu region is not known, but estimates place it around 2 lakh including those who were born in the State after their parents were forced out of their homes in Pakistan and Pakistan-held Kashmir in the wake of Pakistani invasion on Kashmir in 1947. The majority of the refugees are Harijans and belong to the weaker section of the society. Jammu's political scene acquired a serious complexion when almost all Hindu-dominated political parties and groups vehemently opposed the enactment of the Resettlement Bill by the State Legislature providing for the "permanent return or resettlement of permanent residents of the State" who migrated to Pakistan after 1 March 1947. The controversial Act was the product of Dr. Farooq Abdullah's regime. It laid down the procedure for facilitating the return of the migrants to this side of the border for resettlement. It covered people who, before May 1954, were State subjects of class I and class II and who migrated to Pakistan after 1 March 1947.

Islamabad found it easy to treat the Muslim refugees in Pakistan and Pakistani Kashmir as residents of that country. But a solution to the problems of displaced persons residing in Jammu and Kashmir has not been reasoned out in view of the present position of the State Constitution. The difficulty arises mainly from the constitutional provisions under which only persons settled in the State before 1940 or those who had acquired immovable property before that date are to be granted State subject rights. Through another clause in the State Constitution, the right to own property, admission to technical institutions, right to scholarships or other help from the government in the form of loans and employment are also restricted to State subjects. This law also imposes restrictions on non-State subjects acquiring immovable property in Jammu and Kashmir. All these disqualifications put together make the refugees, Hindu and Sikh, on this side of the border second class citizens. Yet another tragedy is that sons and daughters of the refugees are paying for the mistakes of their parents who crossed into Jammu and Kashmir instead of going to other parts of India.

Unpleasant aspect of the situation is that even the internationally accepted principle of birth does not help these people in acquiring citizenship rights in the State. A refugee leader, Sardar Bachan Singh Panchi, does not see eye to eye with the argument that the State Constitution bars any action on the part of the government to settle this question. His counter argument: "It is an open secret that, from time to time, modifications have been made in this law to accommodate various classes of people. These modifications have been made by the previous governments." Panchi cited an example to justify his argument. He told me that although under the State Constitution only State subjects could be given service in the State cadre, a modification was made to integrate the State services with all-India services and "today officers belonging to cadres like the IAS and IPS are serving in Jammu and Kashmir despite the fact that they do not belong to the State". Similarly, though outsiders cannot buy immovable property, large industrial houses and multi-nationals have been invited to set up industries and have been given long leases of land in Jammu and

Kashmir. In some cases these leases are of more than 90 years duration.

In this process, units of groups like the Birlas, Tatas and some international giants have been established or are in the process of being established. Similarly, to make use of bank credit, laws have been modified to enable people to mortgage property in favour of financial institutions who for this purpose are also non-State subjects. The refugees' demand is quite clear favouring, as it does, grant of proprietary rights over lands and residential premises left behind in the State by the evacuees. And their revised strategy is equally clear: None of them would be willing to give up the lands and evacuee houses once their original owners returned to this side of the border. The refugees' determination to stick to their guns has, as it seems, followed Pakistan's political arrangement conferring proprietary rights on the Muslim refugees who, according to the majority of the Muslim politicians in the Kashmir Valley, were forced to flee to the other side of the border following the communal disturbances in the Jammu region in 1947-48. But many of these refugees, as is known in Jammu, had voluntarily crossed over to Pakistan and "Azad Kashmir" since the 1965 Indo-Pak war. The exact number of the people who fled or migrated to the areas across the line of control is not known. But some estimates have put the number around 6 lakh, all Muslim, most of whom lived in the Jammu region, mainly in the border districts of Kathua, Jammu and Poonch.

Each political party in the Jammu region has been trying to take advantage of—indeed, exploit—grievances of the displaced persons on this side of the border. Curiously, the record of the Congress(I) which is now supporting the refugees' demand is also not very clear. For instance, leaders of the State Congress(I) cannot explain why they allowed this problem to hang on for 23 years when they were in power. During this period most of the original migrants were settled on land close to the border. They have richly contributed by making the border safe as well as turning barren land into green fields. Yet they have not been given proprietary rights over lands under their occupation.

About ten months after his installation as the Chief Minister, Farooq Abdullah conveyed to New Delhi his proposal

favouring conversion of the existing line of actual control in the State into "international border" between India and Pakistan. "My suggestion can be regarded as one of the solutions to the Kashmir problem", he pointed out after he floated his proposal, officially, for the first time in the subcontinent. Considering Kashmir's accession to India and occupation of "Azad Kashmir" by Pakistan as part of the post-1947 history, Farooq had explained that with Pakistan insisting on Kashmir being the main irritant between the two countries it would not be harmful if some suggestions were considered for a settlement of the "bigger" Kashmir problem.

Farooq's statement evoked a bitter reaction across the border: Pakistan rejected the demand seeking reopening of the highway between Rawalpindi and Srinagar. The demand had also favoured free trade and traffic on the Sialkot-Jammu route. A portion of the Srinagar-Rawalpindi road (from Rawalpindi to Kohala) was, during Maharaja Hari Singh's time, considered to be the British territory. The remaining stretch, from the middle of the Kohala bridge to Srinagar, was a part of the State territory until the entire highway was closed for trade and traffic in the wake of armed hostilities between India and Pakistan in 1947. Since then several points from Chinari to Rawalpindi on the old road have been under the control of Pakistani ground forces. They have deeply entrenched themselves there with the setting up of various defence installations and formations around Hatia, Dupta, Dumel and Kohala.

Naturally, therefore, Pakistan has found it risky to allow restoration of traffic on the old route. Indian authorities, too have considered the question of reopening the Srinagar-Rawalpindi and Jammu-Sialkot routes as ticklish in view of its relationship with the overall settlement of the Kashmir problem. In the absence of friendlier relations between the two countries, New Delhi would not like to take up the issue with Islamabad as the issue requires a thorough study in the context of the existence of terrorists, spies and trouble-makers close to the border. The number of Pakistani agents and spies has shown a spectacular rise in Jammu and Kashmir since the middle of 1980. Without any fanfare the government of India set up a new

agency, in 1984, to deal with the menace posed in the State by spies, both Indian and foreign. A number of people schooled in the art of surveillance were divided into small groups and assigned the task of monitoring the activities of spies in the State and recommending counter-measures.

Known as the Secret Service Group (SSG), the agency came into being at the instance of R.N. Kao, the then security adviser to Mrs. Gandhi. Little was known about factors responsible for its formation. And even its members could not afford to indulge in the exercise of examining the pros and cons of the role assigned to them. Their role was defined with the setting up of the agency. The agency's planners had insisted on the utmost secrecy as they selected sleuths to deal with what was officially described as "the agonising problem" caused by spies and subversive elements in Jammu and Kashmir. However, the existence of SSG became known when, at a place on the outskirts of Srinagar, several agents drawn from Research and Analysis Wing, Intelligence Bureau, Military Intelligence and Border Security Force intelligence wing, assembled to receive introductory lectures by experts, three of them had flown in from Delhi. The lectures were about the daily routine on the field. While the schedule resembled a typical college programme, the contents of the course did not. In many lectures the participants heard of "flaps and seals" and "locks and picks"—subjects designed to teach them how to open envelopes and letters and to pick locks. Others included "elicitation", the "dossier", "agent-handling" and "agent-recruiting".

One exercise was tailing. The members were to operate in groups of four and keep a detailed record of the movements of one of the instructors on a given day. They were told only that he would emerge from a certain hotel at a given time. Feeling totally conspicuous, some of the trainees stationed themselves at a distance from the hotel entrance at the height of the afternoon rush. Soon their "rabbit" emerged and they followed him. The fellow walked to the nearest bar where they picked him up that evening in fine shape. The exercise was intended to provide practical training to deal with spies and smugglers. Importance of the exercise notwithstanding, the disappearance of two Sikh visitors from a five-star hotel in

Srinagar on the eve of Indian tourism minister, H.K.L. Bhagat's visit to Kashmir on 14 November 1985 gave some anxious moments for the police and security personnel. While the hotel staff were worried about a bill of Rs. 6,000 left unpaid by them, the police were excited by a theory that the two men could have come to kill the minister who, many Sikhs believed, was one of the persons who masterminded the Delhi riots following Mrs. Gandhi's assassination on 31 October 1984.

Security was tightened and a few changes were made in the minister's tour schedule because of the apprehension. Though the fears were belied, the two Sikhs could not be traced. The two men had checked into the Broadway Hotel on Maulana Azad Road on 7 November. All the luggage they had was an attache case, which was later found abandoned in the double bed-room that was allotted to them. Only one of them, Rajbir Singh, entered his name in the hotel register and the address was put down as "B-120/1, Rajouri Garden, New Delhi", which was later found to be false. The nationality was entered as "Indian" though the police had doubts about it. The hotel receptionist said he had not noticed anything unusual at that time and that Rajbir Singh had filled the register without slightest hesitation. After they deposited Rs. 500 with the hotel cashier as the advance, the two were shown to room 209. The room boy said they had a quick wash after which they sat at a table for about an hour drinking foreign whisky. The room boy could not make anything out of their conversation he overheard but he had an impression that they were discussing some serious matter.

After lunch, siesta and tea, the two visitors left the hotel for a couple of hours and returned by 7.30 in the evening. They again had drinks, both before and after dinner. The room boy again found them engrossed in a serious subject that was beyond his understanding. The next morning the visitors hired a taxicab for a 45-km ride to Gulmarg, a health resort 8,500 feet above sea level. Gulmarg was also the place where Bhagat was to go to inaugurate the Nehru Skiing and Mountaineering Institute and a four-star hotel. On reaching the entry point, the travellers told driver, Ghulam Ahmed, to wait outside the resort. They spent about five hours in Gulmarg apparently

sight-seeing and returned to the hotel after sundown. They went straight to their room without any small talk with the hotel staff and ordered food and drinks.

The next day, 9 November, they hired the same taxi to go on a sight-seeing trip to Pahalgam, where they were seen entering a hotel owned by a Sikh called Narinder Singh. They were told that Narinder had moved down to Srinagar and once back to their hotel room they called, through the hotel's telephone operator, Narinder's residence. The call lasted a minute or so and they were told that Narinder was away in Jammu. The next two days the two Sikhs spent their time in and around Srinagar and at least one more time they tried to contact Narinder but again in vain. On 12 November they left the room after breakfast. That was the last the hotel staff saw of them. When they did not return even the next day, the hotel staff opened the room and found just the attache case. As the bill of Rs. 6,000 was left unpaid, police were informed of the missing "tourists".

Police suspected that there was something more to it since Kashmir's tourism minister, Mrs. Khem Lata Wakhloo, was to host a dinner for Bhagat in the same hotel the next day. Though the abandoned attache case did not yield any incriminating material, an alert was ordered and Delhi police were contacted to check the address given by Rajbir Singh. The address turned out to be false. With this started hectic activity in Srinagar. Armed policemen and commandos were deployed at Srinagar airport, around Broadway Hotel and Gulmarg. Bhagat was coming to Srinagar by a Boeing flight from Jammu, and he was scheduled to travel by an air force helicopter to Gulmarg from Srinagar. The helicopter was suddenly withdrawn, fearing an attack on it in the mountainous Gulmarg where it could be an easy target for terrorists with highly sophisticated weapons. Bhagat was told that the helicopter could not be flown because of poor visibility.

So Bhagat drove to Gulmarg amid tight security measures in which Indian Army personnel were also involved. Bhagat was accompanied by his wife, Kashmir Legislative Assembly Speaker, Mangat Ram Sharma and two ministers—Mrs. Wakhloo and Ghulam Hassan Mir. Bhagat was reportedly wearing a

bullet-proof vest. Yet the security people were on tenter-hooks till he left the State for Delhi on 15 November. Though Bhagat had a safe journey, the police tried to locate the two missing persons. That was the time when they had reports from the RAW that some foreign terrorists were on the prowl in Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh. It was also said that Moscow had warned New Delhi that some terrorists trained abroad had crossed over to India with the intention of killing important political leaders, including Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

Earlier, in mid-January, intelligence agencies made a great sensation in the Indian Army's northern command with the dramatic exposure of a well-knit espionage ring. Hardly had the intelligence outfits recovered from the shock after busting the biggest ever espionage network in India, when the chance arrest of an ex-serviceman threatened to develop into a major scandal in the Army's northern command. If the spy scandal in the Indian Prime Minister's secretariat exposed the limitations of the national security apparatus, the unearthing of the spy ring in India's vital border army command in Jammu and Kashmir exposed chinks in the military intelligence units. Since the ring was busted even as the Delhi case was throwing up startling revelations, it did not get the media attention it deserved. Moreover, the normally secretive military set-up virtually put a lid on the episode. Apart from the standard Defence Ministry announcement about the detection of a few defence personnel for interrogation, the Ministry would not even acknowledge the spy ring bust. What the Army brass would not like to talk about was that the "kingpin" of the ring, Aya Singh, was one of the prime suspects of the infamous Samba spy scandal.

Aya Singh, who was arrested by the Indian security forces in the Ranbir Singh Pura sector while trying to cross over into Kashmir from across the border, had turned an approver in the earlier scandal. In fact, it was based on his confession that an entire regiment was disbanded then. While a number of officers and men were court-martialled, Singh was discharged from the Army. As with the earlier case, Singh was only too willing to talk soon after he was nabbed. He was handed over to the

Intelligence Bureau for questioning after his arrest. And it was to the credit of the IB that they unravelled a spy network soon after its bust of the Delhi ring. Once the IB interrogators cornered him, Aya Singh yielded valuable information while talking of his operations. Soon the military intelligence also joined in to trace his contacts. He made the job easier for them by naming names and places. Singh said in his confession: "I evaded the security net during my clandestine trips to the Jammu region on more than one occasion from Pakistan in the past. These trips were for spying and making contacts for Pakistan."

What embarrassed the military higher-ups and came as a revelation to the counter-intelligence agents was his disclosure that he had no difficulty in collecting military secrets during his undetected visits to some contacts in the Indian Army in the Jammu region. Then followed a flurry of raids on residential premises of some defence personnel and their civilian accomplices in different parts of the State. At least 15 persons were taken in for questioning. Investigations established, beyond doubt, that members of the spy ring had traded military secrets with Pakistani intelligence agencies for pecuniary benefits. Three of the arrested suspects made a quick confession, providing interesting details of how they collected military secrets before passing them off to Pakistan. They also confessed that photographs of some strategic forward bases in Jammu and Kashmir were passed on to Pakistani agents. As in the Delhi case, even the servicemen were allegedly lured by the easy money offered by the Pakistani agents. Since the restrictions imposed on civilians to take pictures of Indian defence installations did not apply to the defence personnel in Jammu and Kashmir, men and officers of the armed forces could freely use cameras while serving in forward areas. And Pakistani intelligence seemed to have exploited this lacunae. A picture considered as "informative" by Pakistanis could fetch prices ranging from Rs. 500 to Rs. 2,000. How many such pictures had been passed on to Pakistan may never be known.

Weeks before the intelligence agencies made a sensation in the Army's northern command, the Indian Home Ministry ordered an inquiry into a case of violation of what was described

as "mode of conducting secret business" by the head of the BSF intelligence wing in Kashmir. He was accused of having allowed three Pakistani nationals to meet him at a place in Srinagar without prior permission from his principals in Delhi's North Block. These Pakistanis, who were said to have been without valid travel documents, spent some time in Srinagar before returning to Pakistan-held "Azad Kashmir". The Pakistanis were conducted from a forward base in north-east Kashmir to Srinagar. The Home Ministry was not consulted before the carefree journey was allowed for the three Pakistanis. Efforts were made by the BSF official to go scot-free. But he was eventually removed from Srinagar and, in his place, B.N. Kabu was installed.

11

Wind Rises

Soldiers, it has been found, use no euphemisms. And understandable it was when Lieutenant-General, M.L. Chibber, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Northern Command, called a spade a spade before his retirement from active service in September 1985. "Morals and quality of Army officers corps" in India had declined over the years, he said. Interestingly, he was not alone to nurse such an anxiety. The chiefs of the Army, Navy and Air Force has also submitted a joint note to the government of India on the decline in the quality and morals of military personnel, particularly among the officers corps. General Chibber's assertion: "India needs military officers corps of such quality that the country does not suffer any military setback in future". And his conclusion: "While technology can be bought, the military leadership has to be built with care over many decades".

This was the theme of the thesis which won General Chibber doctorate of philosophy from Allahabad University in 1984. The 193-page thesis was based on interviews with a large number of people and replies to questions sent to nearly 1,000 retired and serving officers of the Indian Army, Navy and Air Force. M.L. Chibber had, besides dealing with historical survey of Indian soldiers, discussed the growth of officers corps in India and assessed their problems and suggested steps that could be taken to build highly professional officers. In the thesis, Chibber laid emphasis on the need for officers corps to know their men "better than their mothers do,

even care more". The corps should acquire expertise for management of violence by subordinating individual interest to the group and by cultivating a sense of discipline and sacrifice.

He had also laid stress on the need of keeping the armed forces above politics and so long the officers corps remained uninterested in politics there was no possibility of an army coup in India. He believed that frequent army coups in Pakistan had been the result of involvement of armed forces in politics in that country which ultimately led to the creation of Bangladesh. Chibber dealt, in detail, with "wrong allegation of conspiracies" levelled against two distinguished Army commanders of India, General Thimayya and Gen. J.N. Choudhary in the past, which, he pointed out, should be avoided at all costs. Gen. Choudhary and Gen. Thimayya were wrongly accused of plotting a coup. Chibber said that had not the then Indian home secretary, L.P. Singh, intervened General Choudhary would have been deprived of the Army chief's post.

Across the Kashmir border, in Pakistan, the army officer corps is increasingly drawn from middle-class, more orthodox and religious families. Gen. Zia-ul-Haq is quite representative of this class of officers. Barely a day after the lifting of martial law in Pakistan towards the end of 1985, Gen. Zia was found by his Prime Minister, Mohammed Khan Junejo, working on quite an important scheme envisaging a "massive" increase in the size of his country's armed forces. Gen. Zia's scheme was intended to make available for Pakistan a people's army on the Chinese model. The Pakistan Prime Minister could not discourage Gen. Zia after the latter insisted on the importance of his project. Gen. Zia who, even after the lifting of martial law, retained the post of the chief of army staff was quoted by intelligence specialists as having stressed the need for a vigorous drive to make available for Pakistan a people's army.

Mohammed Khan Junejo looked thoughtful during his visit to Gen. Zia's official premises on 6 January, a day after the country's largest opposition party (Pakistan People's Party) staged the first open political rallies since eight and a half years of martial law ended towards the end of December. Gen.

Zia, too, was thoughtful with the PPP leader Nabi Dad Jahan's demand for his resignation from the post of military chief. However, Gen. Zia's decision to continue as chief of army staff, a post he kept in addition to the presidency, became evident with his advocacy of the scheme favouring a "massive" increase in the size of his country's armed forces to create a people's army on the Chinese model.

In confidential letters to selected military commanders in Pakistan and Pakistani "Azad Kashmir", Gen. Zia proposed the introduction of "mass military training" to secure Pakistan from internal and external threats. His letters asked the recipients for their ideas and early replies. Gen. Zia also favoured inclusion of his country's present standing army in the new force with "a specified role". It was apparently in this context that he told Mohammed Khan Junejo that if a people's army was set up it might have to keep ideas of how Pakistan's economic and defence needs could be fulfilled simultaneously. Gen. Zia chose to withhold the information regarding the projected cost of the proposed people's army. But his intention to elicit the support of others too was broadly explained by his observation that the present government in Pakistan had to divide expenditure between defence preparedness and economic development.

An important component of Pakistani strategic doctrine has been deterrence of an Indian attack. This has become the dominant theme of Pakistani defence planners, for they realise that the risk of initiating war becomes greater. The preparation of strategic doctrine in Pakistan closely resembles an attempt to hit numerous moving targets from a moving vehicle. But the capacity of Pakistan itself to respond to such threats has drastically changed within a short time. Pakistan, according to Gen. Zia himself, is faced with the prospect of incursions along the Durand Line but cannot risk a massive transfer of forces to its western frontier for fear of leaving its border with India open to attack.

New Delhi appears to be keen to prevent modern American weapons from reaching Pakistan. But recent evidence from Washington indicates that the Reagan Administration is equally keen to show its symbolic support for Pakistan. As an

example, America has proposed new combat aircraft, known as Northrop fighter, the F-5G. Happily for Islamabad, the Reagan Administration argued, on more than one occasion, that India possessed a very large, well-equipped, well-trained military establishment that provided it with a "decisive superiority" over Pakistan in the air as well as on the ground. India has, on the other, justified size of its Army on the grounds that it must keep some "mountain" divisions in the Himalayas to meet a potential Chinese threat. New Delhi insists that these divisions should not be included in India-Pakistan comparisons. Islamabad insists that these "mountain" divisions, after being added to India's other infantry divisions, have altered the overall strategic balance of ground forces between the two countries.

No less important is the mechanization of regular Pakistani infantry divisions, which improves—at great cost—their punch and mobility on the plains. The imbalance of regional representation within the Pak army has not changed over a 37-year period. This has given rise to some embarrassment and to suggestions for reorganising the basic recruiting system. In a recent discussion of the fundamental structure of the infantry, some Pakistanis advocated a "corps of infantry"—that would mean the elimination of the regimental system and the present practice of maintaining quotas for different classes. There have also been suggestions that the British-derived pattern of officer-jawan be altered in Pakistan and that the mass volunteer-army model be followed. At its upper levels the system is now marked by anomalies, because the man who is chief of army staff (and therefore subordinate to the Defence Minister and the Prime Minister) is also President.

Before the lifting of martial law in Pakistan, a significant event was allowed to take place. Pakistan circulated maps and financed publication of pamphlets and periodicals in support of Islamabad's claim over the entire Gilgit Agency located across Kashmir. Printed material and maps placed the strategic region of Gilgit in the "undisputed" zone—in other words, part of Pakistan. As part of its plan seeking gradual merger of the Gilgit Agency with the rest of Pakistan, Islamabad has set up a committee of officials to suggest measures for increasing

Pakistan's political and administrative control over the strategic region. Pakistani move is to treat the entire Gilgit Agency as part of Pakistan. The move runs counter to historical records in support of the fact that, following the occupation of the entire territory by Pakistan in the wake of 1947 war with India, the issue became debatable.

Appearance of the maps has been regarded significant in the context of Pakistan's decision to keep open for travellers and sight-seers the Khunjerab mountain pass at the terminus of the Karakoram highway in the occupied Kashmir. Pakistan's opinion that sovereignty of Gilgit and neighbouring parts "now lies with the government at Muzaffarabad" has been regarded by New Delhi as politically motivated, intended to confuse public opinion on either side of the border. Known for being the northernmost outpost of the Indian subcontinent, Gilgit commands all passes over the Hindu Kush from Shimshal in the east to those around the Yasin river head in the west. To its east and south, Gilgit dominates approach-routes to Ladakh and Kashmir and the Indus valley leading to northwest of the subcontinent.

The geo-political situation witnessed a spectacular change with the conclusion of the Pakistan-China border agreement of March 1963. And, with the passage of time, a definite change also took place in the Sino-Pak collaboration and co-operation, compelling Islamabad to woo China in order to contain the growing threat from the Soviet Union in the neighbouring Afghanistan. Islamabad has taken all possible measures to keep China in a good humour and China, on the other, has made gradual inroads into the Gilgit Agency. That China intends to step up its influence and activity in the strategically-important Gilgit Agency has been indicated by the nature and contents of posters circulated, not long ago, in Hunza and adjoining areas. Posters referred to "old Chinese accounts" in support of Beijing's subtle move seeking to lay claim to Hunza, the Taghdumbash Pamirs and Raskam valley. In the absence of Islamabad's resentment against Beijing's wide eyes on the region, China has found it easy to reap where she has not sown.

Intelligence specialists point out that the terms of the

Pakistan-China border agreement of March 1963 have since been bypassed with the occupation of a slice of territory in and around Hunza by the Chinese. With Kashmir as the focal point of tension in the area, the security question naturally looms large. The Karakoram highway has given the Chinese direct access to Gilgit and from there to the heart of Pakistan. Even more important, it provides for the Chinese a backdoor entry to the Arabia Sea, and hence an infinitely shorter route to West Asia and Africa. The 537-mile Karakoram highway stretches from the Indus valley of Pakistan to Sinkiang province of China. China and Pakistan have officially maintained that the Karakoram highway is a trade route. They do not proclaim the military significance of the road. But New Delhi has already discounted its trade aspects and Indian defence experts are worried about its strategic implications for India's security.

The road is a pointer to yet another important aspect: Even better links can be forged with China, and the replacement of the Chinese artillery and tanks, which now form the bulk of Pakistan's arsenal, will not depend on a long sea route or a perilous air link. Pakistan would like to insist on its claim over Gilgit. But her plan designed, as it is, to merge the entire Gilgit Agency with the rest of the Islamic country may encounter numerous difficulties in view of the altered, or altering, strategic situation in Central Asia. Now that China has come to occupy an important place in Pakistan's foreign policy and more so after the 1985 secret mutual defence assistance programme between the two sides, it will be wrong to expect retreat by the Chinese from the Gilgit Agency. The agreement can afford yet another opportunity to the Chinese to entrench themselves across the Kashmir border. Hence, the threat to the security in Ladakh and Kashmir can further increase, notwithstanding New Delhi's desire to support measures seeking tension-free situation in Asia as a whole.

Pakistan has been in touch with China on the situation arising from the former's confrontation with the Indian soldiers in and around the Saichen glacier. Months before I began to prepare this chapter, Asia's largest glacier, Saichen by name, had become the focal point of tension with the armies of India

and Pakistan locked in a serious confrontation. Overlooking Pakistan, India, Tibet, China, Afghanistan and Russia, the Saichen glacier is located in the Karakoram and has been found to be 76 km long. The Saichen glacier is in the strategic Nubra valley of Ladakh. And as the armed confrontation between India and Pakistan is for the control of the glacier up at 18,000 feet, use of artillery and field guns several times since May 1985 was both understandable and unavoidable. Indeed, for months, the vast mountainous track in and around the glacier looked like the world's highest battleground, necessitating the call by New Delhi and Islamabad for the deployment of large bodies of troops and armour on either side.

Nubra valley lies between the Karakoram and the Saltoro ranges to its north and Ladakh or the "Kailas" or "Kangri" range in the south. Nubra includes all the territory drained by the Shyok and the Nubra rivers. With an area of 9,200 sq. miles, the Nubra valley is by far the largest area of the trans-Himalayan region of Ladakh. For the most part inhospitably craggy, the forbidding terrain in the Nubra valley is arid beyond belief. In the midst of serrated ranges of frozen hills and rarefied air even to walk a few yards uphill is an effort requiring a reserve of strength and stamina. The total population of the entire valley was, under the 1981 census, put at around 12,000 with Buddhists forming a majority. There are about 28 villages, including five Balti villages liberated from Pakistani occupation during the 1971 Indo-Pak war.

Islamabad has not taken well the hold of Indian troops over the entire Saichen glacier. Indian Defence Ministry does not want to attach any importance to Islamabad's claim to the glacier. A senior official of the Ministry told me in mid-February 1986 that India had no intention to quit the area—indeed, India "cannot afford to give the strategic glacier to Pakistan on a platter". The Saichen glacier, he asserted, was with the Indian troops even before the 1965 Indo-Pak war. The glacier was left undemarcated when, after the 1971 war, the line of actual control in Jammu and Kashmir was delineated. Significantly, the control line, as approved by New Delhi and Islamabad, was delineated on 19 mosaic maps prepared by Pakistan after the army chiefs of the two countries overcame the seemingly

intractable Thako Chak dispute in the Jammu region on 7 December 1972. A 20-minute formal ceremony at Suchetgarh in the Jammu region on 11 December was followed by an agreement between the two countries.

No sooner did Lt-Gen. P.S. Bhagat from India and Lt-Gen. Abdul Hamid Khan of Pakistan sign the agreement and initial the maps than a statement was issued from Rawalpindi by the then foreign secretary, Aziz Ahmed, saying that the agreement appeared to be to Pakistan's advantage and that the control line "is a temporary line and will remain so as long as the Kashmir dispute is not finally settled". With the passage of time, Pakistan started insisting on the legitimacy of its claim to the Saichen glacier. Apparently encouraged by unidentified American cartographers supporting Pakistan's claim to Saichen, Islamabad manipulated setting up of border observation posts at five places close to the glacier in 1978. Six years later, around April 1984, a new element was introduced into the situation: Pakistani troops hoisted three Pak flags on the Saichen glacier. The development was objected to by the Indian border guards. And on finding the Pakistani soldiers unwilling to quit the area on the Saichen glacier which, according to the Indian authorities formed part of Indian Nubra valley, the armies of the two countries got arrayed against each other resulting in a series of clashes.

In June 1985, New Delhi issued an order declaring Indian border posts and pickets out of bounds for the U.N. military observers in Jammu and Kashmir. The development was provoked by the discovery of pro-Pakistan "strategic priorities" quite pursued by a group of U.N. observers on this side of the line of control. Seizure of hand-written notes and photographs from a courier of a foreign military observer, based in Kargil sector of Ladakh, led to the plea by the Indian Military Intelligence outfit for a ban on the entry into the forward areas by the U.N. observers. While the hand-written papers contained information about the size and structure of Indian troops in Kashmir, the photographs illustrated the location of strategically-important posts and pickets in parts of Ladakh. These papers and pictures were marked for the Srinagar headquarters of the U.N. military observers' group in India and

Pakistan. And their seizure was followed by an interesting revelation in the wake of hurried questioning of the courier. Four Indian defence personnel, acting as investigators, were told by the courier that the papers and pictures had to be sent across as part of a plan to keep Pakistan informed about the Indian defence shield in Kashmir.

Another disclosure made by the courier: "Not long ago, two U.N. military observers who were allowed to trek into Kargil from their field station at Skardu in Pakistan-held Baltistan territory went back with one attache case containing undisclosed number of documents." Although the movement of the two foreign military observers had resulted in an element of suspicion among some political and military circles, no attempt was made to intercept the attache case even when it was handed over to them at a place on the outskirts of the Kargil town. The courier said: "The observers manipulated to carry out their task after they, without any fanfare, distributed gift pieces like cigarette lighters, electronic wrist watches and fountain pens among some officials in the area."

The United Nations military observers' group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) is a field mission supported by U.N. field service personnel. The mission is headed by a chief military observer (CMO) who is appointed, and directly responsible to, the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The existing group (March 1986) consists of 40 military observers from different nationalities—Australia, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Norway, Sweden and Uruguay. With Brigadier-General, Thor A. Johnsen of Norway as the CMO, these observers are either regular or reserve officers assigned to UNMOGIP by their respective governments at the request of the U.N. Secretary-General. The administrative element, which supports the military observers, is headed by a chief administrative officer (CAO) and comprises 33 U.N. field service officers, all international staff, including the personnel necessary to operate the U.N. international radio station at Rawalpindi.

The 40-man observer group is charged with the task of policing the 540-mile line of control (formerly cease-fire line) in Jammu and Kashmir since the first Indo-Pakistan war in 1947. 15 of them are stationed on this side of the border, the rest operating

across on the Pakistani side. Command, control, direction and administrative support are provided through UNMOGIP headquarters at Srinagar from 1 May to 31 October and at Rawalpindi from 1 November to 30 April every year. In Kashmir, U.N. military observers have, after the Indo-Pakistan war in 1971, ceased to be the men of importance. After the line of control in Jammu and Kashmir was delineated on the ground by representatives of the armies of India and Pakistan in December 1972, New Delhi ordered the defence authorities in the State to avoid attaching any importance to the U.N. observers. In other words, the foreign observers were deprived of the authority of policing the line of control and taking notice of happenings including border skirmishes between patrols of the two countries.

Significantly, however, the U.N. military observers, based in Kashmir, do not look nervous in spite of the discreet surveillance on them in Srinagar and elsewhere in the State. Indeed, many of them look defiant, apparently unwilling to wind up their field stations in areas where their freedom has been limited. And although the chief military observer, Thor A. Johnsen, has confirmed reports that the Indian side no longer reported any border incidents in Jammu and Kashmir to the U.N. observers, the Srinagar headquarters of UNMOGIP has decided to keep itself posted with certain aspects of the situation. The decision assumes importance in the context of Pakistan's unpublicised message informing the chief military observer, Johnsen, that in view of Pakistan being a party to the establishment of the organisation of UNMOGIP, New Delhi cannot unilaterally ask for the closure of the field stations of U.N. observers in Kashmir. Pakistan supports the continuance of these observers on either side of the border. And Pakistan has thousands of supporters in Indian Kashmir, notwithstanding the fact that Kashmir forms part of the map of India.

12

Delhi's Intervention

Newstime, an English daily from Hyderabad, capital city of the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, gave an account, on 25 February 1986, of an interesting happening which, for curious reasons, was left unreported by the Press in and outside Kashmir. Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's picture was the object of provocation at a place on the outskirts of Anantnag town in south Kashmir. His photograph was pulled down from a wall and then torn up by none other than an activist of the state Congress (I). More amusing was the manner in which quite a few Congressmen, who watched the event, appeared to share their colleague's anger against the Prime Minister. The unusual reaction of violation what could be sacred to the ruling Congress party in New Delhi was not quite unwarranted. The blasphemy was done soon after the announcement of Delhi's support to G.M. Shah and his government in Jammu and Kashmir. The Congress (I) activist did not stop at tearing up the picture. He also chanted anti-Rajiv slogans as he was pulling apart the black and white photograph.

It happened a day after the Prime Minister's meeting with Shah in Delhi on 10 February. The announcement of New Delhi's support to the Shah government was unexpected not only by the state Congress (I) but also by the Chief Minister himself, since the Congress (I) vice-president, Arjun Singh, was critical of the ruling National Conference faction during his quiet meetings with senior PCC leaders in Jammu and Srinagar during his three-day visit to the state in the beginning of February. Arjun Singh arrived in Jammu on 7 February and

flew back to Delhi from Srinagar on 9 February without providing a precise answer to the question: "How long will G.M. Shah's government last"? Officially, Arjun Singh travelled to Kashmir as the vice-president of the ruling party at the Centre. Unofficially, he proved himself as Rajiv Gandhi's representative during his three-day stay in the state.

Chief Minister Shah was not formally informed about the programme of Arjun Singh despite the fact that the former was in the Indian capital when latter took off from the Palam airport for Kashmir's winter capital, Jammu. It was, undoubtedly, the game of politics that Shah chose to play on 6 February when he communicated, from the Kashmir House in Delhi, an urgent message directing his colleagues in the state to treat the Congress (I) vice-president with due courtesy. Arjun Singh had not come to Kashmir for sight-seeing. He was sent in to study the situation arising from the cracks in the alliance between the Shah camp and the Congress (I) in the state. In Srinagar, he stayed in the Broadway Hotel, which is owned by Tirth Ram Amla, a Congress member of the Lok Sabha (lower House of the Indian Parliament). Without informing Arjun Singh, the local administration made elaborate security arrangements in and outside the hotel he stayed in. And for hundreds of villagers it was an unusual experience when, before their contact with Singh, each one of them had to be subjected to scrutiny with the help of metal detectors used by police personnel in mufti. Metal detectors were seen both inside the Broadway Hotel and near the main entry point of the PCC (I) headquarters on the Maulana Azad Road. A group of police and CID personnel had, undoubtedly, a tough time on 9 February when scores of anxious Congressmen sought to storm into the premises of the PCC headquarters.

Interestingly, a policeman on duty did not even spare Ghulam Rasool Kar, senior vice-president of the state Congress party. Hand-operated metal detector had hardly touched Kar's right shoulder when a sub-inspector of the CID swiftly intervened and conducted him inside the PCC office. Kar and others did not object to the tight security measures, for they were not unaware of the existence of anti-India elements in the Muslim-majority Kashmir. All those who had assem-

bled inside the PCC headquarters had only wanted to know from Arjun Singh whether the Congress (I)'s support to the Shah government had to continue or not. Singh did not refer to this issue at all during his 35-minute speech. He had a reason to be uncommunicative on the subject. He did not want his audience to know that the absence of a viable alternative had necessitated New Delhi to tolerate the controversial establishment headed by G.M. Shah. Singh made a passing reference to the hardships experienced by the Congressmen in Jammu and Kashmir. His reference was in the context of the demand voiced by the Congress (I) in the state for change of the Shah government.

But Arjun Singh refused to make public his party's grievances against the Shah regime. His refusal had a basis. In his meeting with three senior functionaries of the state PCC—Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, Ghulam Rasool Kar and Maulvi Iftikhar Hussain Ansari—after his dinner in the Broadway Hotel on 8 February, Singh had advocated the idea of cultivating Shah in a manner as to prompt him to step down voluntarily before smooth transfer of power to the Congress (I). And although Singh had been given a hint of the anti-Shah posture adopted by four ministers in Jammu and Kashmir during his quiet meeting with the state's Health Minister, Dr. Mehboob Beg, in Jammu on 7 February, it was found necessary by him (Singh) to counsel Maulvi Iftikhar and others to desist from attempts that would agitate Shah and his five trusted ministers—Ghulam Mohammed Bhaderwahi, Hasam-ud-Din Banday, Rafiq Hussain Khan, Mohammed Khaleel Johar and Hakim Yasin.

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, as explained by Arjun Singh, had not wanted his partymen in Kashmir to carry the citadel with a rush. It was apparently in this context that Singh counselled the Kashmir Congress leaders to wait and watch. Even Chief Minister Shah was asked to wait in Delhi until Rajiv Gandhi's return from Maldives. Shah who had planned to return to Jammu on 9 February was told to stay put as Rajiv wanted to have a formal meeting with him in Delhi on 10 February. The meeting which lasted about 70 minutes was followed by the Prime Minister's announcement of his support

to the Shah regime. Hence, Shah proved himself luckier than his political adversaries within Farooq Abdullah's National Conference and New Delhi-backed Congress party in the state. And if there was any doubt about it, it was set at rest by none other than the Prime Minister himself when, during his meeting with Shah, he announced a fresh lease of life for the government headed by the latter.

Earlier, too, on 21 March 1985, Rajiv Gandhi had disappointed ambitious Congressmen in the state by his support to the Shah government in spite of Governor Jagmohan's plea for "early steps to oust Shah from power". Rajiv's support to Shah was announced then soon after Shah had hosted a dinner at the Kashmir House in New Delhi in honour of the Prime Minister. It was Shah's "gushtaba diplomacy" which proved its effectiveness as the elixir for people plagued by uncertain fluctuating political fortunes. Universally recognised as the finest specimen of Kashmir's culinary art, "gushtaba" is gourmets delight. Minced meat, cooked in milk and moulded into a ball, "gushtaba" is served as the last course signalling the end of Muslim feast in Kashmir. "Gushtaba" is known to have been intimately connected with the rise and fall of politicians in Jammu and Kashmir. As many in Srinagar recall, it has made and unmade rulers in the state especially after 1947 when toppling of governments with New Delhi's open or tacit support became pastime with the politicians. That perhaps explains the story that "degchis" (typical Kashmiri earthen utensils) full of "gushtabas" occasionally were flown to Delhi to keep rulers there in good humour. The practice had started with late Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed who overthrew Sheikh Abdullah's government in August 1953 and reached its climax on 21 March 1985.

A joke in circulation in Srinagar following the costlier feast in Delhi's Kashmir House on 21 March was that the Prime Minister, after partaking of non-vegetarian dishes with Shah, had summoned Mumma Waza who was the head of the select team of Kashmiri cooks flown to the Indian capital for the purpose and asked him for his reward in recognition of his extra-ordinary talent in the culinary art. Visibly overjoyed, the Kashmiri cook, in his characteristic style, curtsied and replied: "Sir, I want

nothing for myself. All that I crave for is khalat (crown) for our Shenshah (G.M. Shah)". Boon was instantly granted: Rajiv assured Shah of his party's support when many in Kashmir were expecting "imminent" fall of the Shah regime. Curiously, some critics of the Shah government had insisted on calling local Congressmen as "gushtabas" stored in Shah's "degchi". The nickname, however, did not last long as the majority of the Congress MLAs called for measures to change the Shah regime. For their part, activists loyal to Mufti Sayeed were found providing all the elements that make for a situation to be described as "fluid" and therefore calling for New Delhi's intervention. Even the Indian Home Minister, S.B. Chavan, was found in line with the state Governor, Jagmohan, and senior Congress (I) leaders who had opposed continuance of the Shah government. During his brief visit to Kashmir in September 1985, Chavan had declined to support Shah. "Shah has totally failed to do away with the political uncertainty in Kashmir", Chavan told me in Srinagar. "You wait and watch", quick came his reply to my question: "How come your Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi has become his supporter?"

In mid-February 1986, hundreds of Muslims in Kashmir were not inoperative—indeed, their reaction was violent to the reopening of the "disputed" Ram Janam Bhoomi temple in Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh. Moderates among the Muslims had an uneasy time on 13 February when quite a few of their co-religionists expressed their hot displeasure, involving a desire for retaliation. The provocation was from the Hindu militant organisation, Shiv Sena, whose workers celebrated the "liberation" of the temple while parading the main thoroughfares in the Hindu-majority city of Jammu. Trouble-shooters, smaller in number, were outwitted in Kashmir when, following the police firing in the walled city of Delhi, groups of unruly demonstrators took to streets on 15 February and indulged in acts of violence. Their intention was to express themselves in support of the claim to the place of worship as Babri Masjid and not Ram Janam Bhoomi temple as stated by Hindus in and outside Ayodhya.

Raj Kapoor, a well-known actor and film producer of Bombay, would have been aghast had he heard those wild cries.

The title of his film "Ram Teri Ganga Maili" was used as a mocking slogan by the crowds that attacked dozens of houses, shops and temples in Kashmir. Provoked by a court order reopening Ram Janam Bhoomi temple of Ayodhya, groups of Muslim zealots rushed about wildly amid chanting of "Ram Teri Ganga Maili" slogan. The slogan was not without importance for those who made use of it repeatedly. They, like the rest of their co-religionists, had wanted the "disputed" place of worship in Ayodhya to be declared as the Babri Masjid. But with the reopening of the place as Ram Janam Bhoomi temple, tremors of tension and fear became too evident to be missed almost everywhere in the Muslim majority Kashmir in spite of the deployments of police and para-military personnel in strength.

Wild rumours about "killing of hundreds of Muslims" in their encounter with Shiv Sena activists in the Jammu city were allowed to be circulated in Srinagar and elsewhere in the Kashmir Valley shortly after curfew was imposed in the vicinity of Jammu on 19 February. Interestingly, it was after a series of acts of violence and arson on 20 February and 21 February that official agencies repeated their appeals to the local population not to pay any attention to rumours. Kashmir's divisional commissioner, Ghulam Qadir Lone, had advocated the idea of persuading newsmen in Srinagar to put out sketchy reports even when parts of south Kashmir witnessed violence, vandalism and unprovoked assault on temples, houses and shops of the minority community. Lone had even recommended to his Chief Minister, G.M. Shah, the "need" for action against a couple of newsmen. But Shah did not oblige Lone, for the former was not prepared to bring hornets' nest about his ears.

Lone as well as the DIG of police, S.S. Ali, concealed many a fact. Both of them had apparently wanted "go slow" tactics by newsmen even when most of them had been directed by their principals outside the state to keep on filing detailed reports on the situation as it developed with emergence of a dangerous trend: anti-Hindu posture adopted by a section of Muslims. The local authorities declined to share with newsmen the number of houses, shops and temples damaged completely or partially even when the police control room in Srinagar had a full picture in this connection, before sundown on 22 February. "There

was no untoward incident in the Kashmir Valley", quick came the reply from Ghulam Qadir Lone on 22 February despite the fact that, apart from the flag march by the Indian Army following the unsuccessful attempts by a group of defiant Muslim zealots to set ablaze two temples and loot some Hindu shops on the periphery of Anantnag town, Border Security Force had to be called out in Sopore, 45 km from Srinagar, soon after a few Hindu establishments were attacked in the afternoon that day.

Hindus, especially those living in villages, were living in terror. There were also attacks on some houses in Danu Bogund village in south Kashmir. The assaulters shouted slogans like "Indian dogs go back", "We want Pakistan" and "down with Bharat samraj (Indian imperialism)". Kashmir Hindus had nothing to do with the court order reopening Ram Janam Bhoomi temple. Yet in some towns and villages quite a number of Hindus were subjected to the violent anger of a section of Muslim zealots. That G.M. Shah could not deny the fact became amply evident with his directive to the police and other security agencies to sternly deal with communal elements in the state. Even Muslim politicians, prominent among them being Dr. Farooq Abdullah, Maulvi Farooq and Abdul Gani Lone, were prompted to repeat their appeals for communal amity and brotherhood between the two major communities in Kashmir. True, these politicians and their followers had been hurt by the modus operandi of the Shiv Sena activists in Jammu. But their appeals were intended to counsel the Muslim population to eschew violence and to desist from holding out threats to life and property of the Hindus in Kashmir. Pleas for communal harmony had, significantly, followed the unpublicised threat by the Indian Home Ministry to hand over the entire Valley of Kashmir to the Army and para-military forces if anti-Hindu elements were allowed to rock areas other than Srinagar and Anantnag. Chief Minister Shah, who had planned to fly back to Jammu on 20 February, decided to stay back in Srinagar until 23 February after Arun Nehru, Indian Minister of State for Internal Security, was reported to have voiced New Delhi's concern at the ominous happenings in Kashmir.

After the receipt of a report by him regarding New Delhi's

intention to place the state under President's rule, Shah directed the police authorities to take sterner steps against the trouble-makers. His directive had assumed significance in the context of an open threat by some Indian Army officials to launch military operations if the district authorities in Anantnag failed "in the next 12 hours" to put an end to the reign of terror unleashed by misguided elements in parts of south Kashmir. The threat surfaced before a truckload of armed Army personnel staged a flag march in the strife-torn localities of Anantnag on 20 February. The event led an Indian news agency (UNI) to put out an erroneous report that the Army had been called out in the area. In fact only the Border Security Force (BSF) had been deployed. Protection for Muslims, including the migratory labour force, in Jammu was too evident to be missed with the imposition of curfew there and intensification of round-the-clock patrolling by armed policemen in vulnerable areas. Yet groups of Muslim militants were found keen to violate curfew in Srinagar, Sopore and Anantnag only to place scores of non-Muslims on tenter-hooks for the "mistake" committed by the Shiv Sena activists in Jammu on 13 February when a demonstration was organised there to celebrate the "liberation" of Ram Janam Bhoomi temple of Ayodhya. Quite a few tourists, who had pitched themselves in parts of Srinagar, had to beat a quick retreat when, following the stray incidents of arson and loot curfew was extended to cover the entire city on 20 February merely to prevent possible communal clashes.

Police had to fire several times during the curfew in Srinagar, Sopore and Anantnag to scare away groups of trouble-makers and over 500 persons were arrested in the state by 28 February. A handful of the pro-Pakistan Jamat-i-Islami activists had sought to enlist the support of unspecified number of Sikh youths in Baramulla, 55 km from Srinagar, on 22 February. The timely intervention by two Sikh Army officials, based in Baramulla, rendered ineffective the strategic move by the Jamat activists. Even then a group of Muslims organised a protest demonstration, making clear their anti-Indian stance with shouting of slogans like "Long live Pakistan", "Down with Shiv Sena", "Ram Teri Ganga Maili" and "Indian dogs go back". Indian security agencies were taken aback when, on

22 February, a U.N. military observer, based in Baramulla, accepted a memorandum, loaded with anti-India rhetoric, from some Jamat-i-Islami workers, who requested him to pass it on to the U.N. secretary-general. The development was followed by a warning administered to the U.N. field station in Baramulla by a senior Indian Army official to refrain from entertaining "undesirable" elements and involving itself, overtly or covertly, in political activity. The warning had its quick effect: The U.N. field staff ordered the guard not to let any civilian enter the premises.

Similar orders were issued by the Srinagar headquarters of the U.N. military observers group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP). Armed guards were deployed around the headquarters barely a day before the Indian Home Minister, Chavan, flew in from Delhi on 24 February on a fact-finding mission. His whirlwind tour was the product of New Delhi's deep displeasure over anti-India and anti-Hindu violence in Kashmir. Chavan's visit was regarded significant in the context of a phenomenal increase in the resentment among the tension-laden Hindus against the Shah government's failure to ensure their safety. Black flags were pitched on a number of roof-tops after sundown on 23 February in the Hindu-majority Ganpatyar locality of Srinagar as a mark of protest against the attack on temples, houses and shops of the minority community in parts of Kashmir. Before his departure for Jammu on his way to Delhi, Chavan ordered: "Competent authorities in Kashmir must ensure that no member of the minority community is forced to quit his home or hearth". His directive followed the announcement of an unexpected decision by 250 Hindu families of the riot-torn Wanpoh, Kok Bhavan and Danu Bogund villages in south Kashmir to migrate to places outside Kashmir for their rehabilitation. That Chavan was upset by the plight of hundreds of Hindus, especially women, in parts of the Anantnag district was evident when, soon after his arrival in Jammu, he ordered the state police chief, M.M. Khajooria, to proceed to Anantnag and stay there until the atmosphere became peaceful. He also asked the intelligence Bureau to examine, in depth, the nature of recruitment to the state police force in recent years. Chavan had in his mind the plethora of allegations by Hindus against the

communal character of the police force.

First even days of March became highly eventful. It was a classic case of turning foes into friends and influencing people who mattered. Jammu and Kashmir Governor, Jagmohan, had long lost faith in the government of Shah in tackling the anti-India and communal forces in the state. He was biding his time to strike at an opportune moment. And Shah gave it to him on a platter. His administration had miserably failed to contain the communal fires that swept through the Kashmir Valley and parts of Jammu in February. That was just the lever Jagmohan wanted to ease out the Shah regime, almost unanimously despised in the state. It was only the Congress (I) support that was delaying the inevitable ignominy of dismissal. Jagmohan had drummed support for Governor's rule from the most unexpected quarters. He persuaded Dr. Farooq Abdullah, who had 19 months ago fallen to the machinations of the Governor, to endorse the plan of action.

On 3 March, Dr. Abdullah flew into New Delhi for talks with the Indian leaders. He met Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, Home Minister, Chavan, Congress (I) vice-president, Arjun Singh, and Internal Security Minister, Arun Nehru. The agenda at all the meetings was the crisis situation in Jammu and Kashmir. He readily concurred with Delhi that it was all Shah's doing. And he had to go. Dr. Abdullah was even willing to scale down his own demands. Jagmohan had laid all the groundwork. Earlier, Dr. Abdullah had insisted that the Kashmir Legislative Assembly should be dissolved along with imposition of Governor's rule. Now he concurred with the Central plan of keeping the Assembly in "suspended animation" till such time that normal conditions were restored in the state. That was a deal which sealed the fate of G.M. Shah Ministry. Little did Shah know about his future when he left Jammu for Delhi for talks with the Prime Minister on the Kashmir crisis. Even after the Press conference held in the Indian capital by Kashmir's Deputy Chief Minister, Devi Das Thakur, on 6 March, Shah smarted under the impression that he would not be touched. The impression was apparently the outcome of Rajiv Gandhi's reported remark: "My party does not want to grab power in Kashmir."

The situation, however, did not remain static. Hectic con-

sultations in Delhi on the one hand and, on the other, establishment of a close contact with Jagmohan in Jammu by Arun Nehru on 6 March were followed by the dramatic development: withdrawal of Congress (I) party's support to the Shah government. The announcement came on the morning of 7 March, and New Delhi rushed through the formality of dismissing the Shah government. Shah, who was in Delhi on 6 March, wanted to adopt dilatory tactics. He was not allowed to travel by road up to Jammu. A BSF plane had to be requisitioned for him as part of Delhi's plan to speed up the process of his ouster. Minutes after his landing at the Jammu airport the state Governor's emissary gave him a letter, which announced Jagmohan's decision to dismiss him (Shah's) minority government. Jagmohan's letter was delivered after the consultations were held in Delhi in camera; only the Prime Minister and his closest aides were privy to them. The Centre perhaps feared that given a chance, the wily Shah would not stop at anything to stall his ouster. In the event he did try out a last-ditch manoeuvre. He tried to mend fences with Dr. Farooq, his estranged brother-in-law. But Shah was snubbed by Jagmohan in Jammu's Raj Bhavan around 5.30 in the afternoon on 7 March when the former put up his proposal to enable Dr. Abdullah to form his government with the support of MLAs loyal to the camp led by him (Shah). "I have already dismissed your government", Jagmohan told him. Shah was left high and dry with Jagmohan's remark: "You can go now, for you have no locus standi".

Apparently hurt by New Delhi's standpoint against him, Shah had tried to upset Jagmohan's apple-cart. He first used his mother-in-law, Begum Akbar Jehan, to influence Dr. Farooq. She phoned her son on the afternoon of 7 March to impress upon him the need for a reunion between the two factions of the National Conference. Dr. Farooq politely told her: "I cannot afford to practice deceit on my friend, Rajiv Gandhi, after I strongly supported his formula—Governor's rule in Jammu and Kashmir for the time being". Then Shah tried the direct approach. Dr. Farooq told me: "After I returned home from the Hazratbal shrine on the outskirts of Srinagar, I was told that G.M. Shah wanted to talk to me on telephone. As I had already been told by a friend that Shah wanted me to form a new government with the support of those MLAs who had deceived me in the beginning of July 1984, I avoided attending to Shah's call". Governor Jagmohan had also called Dr. Farooq to know his reaction to Shah's demand that Dr. Farooq be allowed to form a government with the support of pro-Shah MLAs. "I strongly reject the demand", Dr. Farooq told his friend, Jagmohan.

Such was the haste and secrecy involved that even Indian Parliament was kept in the dark about the serious developments in the sensitive state of Jammu and Kashmir. Even as Jagmohan took over the state's administration a furore erupted in the Rajya Sabha with opposition members demanding explanation from the Central government for its action. Jagmohan was actually told about Delhi's plan to get rid of the Shah regime on 28 February, when he held telephonic consultations with Rajiv Gandhi and Arun Nehru. On 1 March, Jagmohan toured the riot-torn areas in south Kashmir in a reassuring show of authority. He even told some victims of the communal clashes that "I have given orders to the district administration to rush necessary relief to the victims". "I shall visit the affected villages very soon to see things for myself. I shall not be a silent spectator and I know how to tackle the problem", he said while talking to a group of affected people in the Wanpoh village. And the "eviction" plan worked out smoothly. Shah was too weakened and isolated to resist New Delhi's pressure tactics. The state Congress (I) leaders had publicly disowned him.

The tone was set by Ghulam Rasool Kar, a sitting member of the Rajya Sabha. On 2 March, he informed the Congress (I) high command that over 1,000 active partymen would quit if the Shah government was not removed by 10 March. The demand was endorsed by nine Congress (I) MLAs, who had earlier joined the PCC chief, Mufti Sayeed, and Maulvi Iftikhar in ridiculing the Shah regime. Initially, Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, wanted to go slow on the ouster move. He was persuaded to hasten the process when Home Minister, Chavan, and Arun Nehru presented him with the "facts and figures" about the state of affairs. The two had rushed to the state in the wake of the communal strife and prepared a virtual charge-sheet against the Shah government. Once Dr. Farooq too agreed to cooperate, Rajiv Gandhi lost no time in giving the go-ahead. Jagmohan had, meanwhile, ensured that the transition of power was smooth. He summoned the state's chief secretary, R.K. Takkar, and police chief, Khajooria, to the Raj Bhavan in Jammu and ordered them "to ensure that Shah and ministers of his cabinet do not take away or tamper with any official documents and files in the secretariat". He also asked them to "keep each one of them under watch, for I have reports about their intentions to encourage anti-Delhi sentiment in the vulnerable pockets of the Kashmir Valley".

Some of Dr. Farooq's close aides did not take kindly to the "concessions" he had made to the Centre. The general secretary of the opposition National Conference, Sheikh Nazir,

and two former ministers, P.L. Handoo and Abdul Rahim Rather, were not fully satisfied, for they had pleaded for dissolution of the Legislative Assembly to be followed by fresh elections. "Please do not get upset, for I expect fresh elections in the state in August-September", he told Handoo soon after he got back to Srinagar on 7 March. Dr. Farooq asserted: "Holding of elections at this stage is not important in the context of the recent communal disturbances in the state. All of us have to rise as one man to restore communal amity in the state". A reassured Handoo took off for Jammu to join his family in the Shivratri festivities. Apparently, Dr. Farooq too had much to celebrate. He had settled scores with his brother-in-law who had betrayed him. Was there a gentleman's agreement with Dr. Farooq? But both Dr. Farooq and Mufti Sayeed were reluctant to speak about the deal. "I am sure the Prime Minister will not let me down", was Dr. Farooq's enigmatic reply to my question. Maulvi Iftikhar told me over telephone: "Our job is not over although we have managed to remove a big hurdle—G.M. Shah".

Maulvi Iftikhar was asked if his letter announcing his party's withdrawal of support to the Shah government was sent in by Delhi before it was submitted to Jagmohan after 11 p.m. on 6 March. "My leader is Rajiv Gandhi whose office and residential premises are located in Delhi", he said without identifying the author of the letter. However, according to the Intelligence Bureau, the letter was drafted in Delhi before its contents were communicated to Jammu. "Those who drafted the letter loaded, as it was, with anti-Shah accent were found in search of appropriate expressions as to justify the Congress(I)'s step", a senior official of the IB told me before I started to prepare news items for Newstime, Hyderabad, and The Week, Cochin (Kerala). The letter was shown to Rajiv and Arun Nehru before it was dictated to Maulvi Iftikhar shortly after he was summoned to the Raj Bhavan in Jammu after sundown on 6 March. Understandably, therefore, G.M. Shah went the way he came—in a blaze of controversy. The same Governor, Jagmohan, who had ushered him in through the backdoor, played a major role in his ouster following rampant communal trouble in the state. Shah was left on the debris of doubts after New Delhi administered a stern warning: "You cannot expect any pity and compassion if you attempted to provoke anti-Delhi sentiment in your homeland". The warning came after his reported encouragement to some of the Muslim militants who were found describing him as the "victim" of New Delhi's pro-Hindu stance.

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